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National Park Service Relevancy in the 21st Century: An Exploration of Racial Inclusion and the Urban Push

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**National Park Service Relevancy in the 21st Century:
An Exploration of Racial Inclusion and the Urban Push**

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Honors Thesis

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National Park Service Relevancy in the 21st Century:
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Introduction

For more than a century, the national park idea has been an integral part of the United States' history and culture. The idea of preserving landscapes from natural resource use and for the enjoyment of the public has been cited as this country's one original contribution to democracy, and even as "America's best idea" (Burns, 2009). In principle, national parks are entirely public and for the benefit of the people: they are funded by public money and traversed by whoever wants to experience them. The truth, as always, is more complicated.

In the past during my research when I have mentioned that I study national park relevancy and racial inclusivity, I have received responses questioning why the National Park Service (NPS) needs to make efforts to be inclusive when national parks are not discriminatory. As one person put it, national parks are basically free, public places that anyone can go to and as parts of a federal agency, free of discrimination of any kind by law. While this may be true, it does not match the fact that in a society that is becoming less racially white each passing decade, national park visitors remain largely white. What is it that makes people of color stay away from the national parks that belong to them, too? The answer is a complex, myriad of factors including white culture's dominance over nature and park creation, collective memories about nature for people of color, geographic mismatch, and lack of engagement, to name a few. I am really interested, however, in another, more action-oriented question: In light of low visitation rates of

growing U.S. populations of color, what is the NPS doing to include people of color and remain relevant to the United States citizenry?

I am also interested in exploring a shift in current national park affairs, which is an intensified focus on the presence of the NPS in urban areas whether that be more often profiling national parks located in urban areas or a greater interest in connecting with people who live near them. From these observations, I formed a second research question: Will the NPS' urban focus help it as an organization to include people of color, and how will this focus change people's relationship to place and NPS landscapes?

This paper is organized into several chapters. The literature review will contextualize the research through outlining the social construction of nature as well as literature reviewing urban parks and leisure studies as they relate to race and ethnicity. The Background section will review the history of the NPS to set up what is happening in the agency today. In the Methodology section I will summarize my research methods. The Analysis section will address what the NPS is doing to include people of color and how part of that is increased focus on urban parks. Additionally, this section will address potential shortcomings and potential for success. Lastly, the Conclusion section will summarize my findings and propose future research suggestions.

Literature Review

Race and Ethnicity in Leisure Studies

This paper explores the role of heritage and the national parks in United States culture, so it is imperative to include the role of race. Much has been written in the past twenty years or so about patterns of racial/ethnic group park usage, and the majority of

these academic works fall under the social science field commonly known as leisure studies. In almost as much time, however, leisure studies has produced a body of writings criticizing the manner in which the field addresses race. Seeing that this paper addresses race and to a certain extent has the potential to contribute to leisure and recreation study conversations, I thought it important to walk through this body of literature.

One of the largest and most criticized elements of leisure studies is how the field “uncritically naturalizes and essentializes ethno-racial formations” (Byrne, 2012, p.5) and assumes internal homogeneity of racial/ethnic groups (Li, 2007). There are numerous studies with titles such as “Recreational Preferences and Behaviors of Hispanics in Tucson, AZ” or “Black/White Outdoor Recreation Preferences and Participation: Illinois State Parks” that even in their titles alone risk homogenizing a large group of people that are more likely to have differences in preference and behavior among themselves than not. Even if these studies for the purpose of practicality generalize the behavior of a certain ethnic groups, some even go farther as to infer homogeneity within these groups’ values. Shinew et al (2006) show a similar concern in that ethnic categories were “ill-fitted to capture the effect of “racial” background on leisure behavior, but they were often used as a proxy for cultural background” (p. 406). In 2007 Li studied the “usefulness of ethnicity as a construct” and as a category from which to draw conclusions in leisure studies through studying a variety of ethnic groups at one park in Los Angeles. They found that there was great heterogeneity of cultural values within each studied ethnic group, and concluded that research comparing two or more ethnic groups without further deconstruction of these ethnic groups is questionable at best.

Shinew et al bring up the important point that race in the U.S. has long since left the black-white binary and entered a multi-tier racial structure, and that this shift is not always reflected in leisure studies. For example, studies often compare recreation patterns of one racial group or multiple racial groups to the white racial group. The increasingly complex hierarchy ascribed to race, and the emerging acknowledgement that race is intersectional with gender, class, etc. make this model of study no longer viable. In other words, Shinew et al argue that likelihood to participate in leisure experiences is more of a spectrum influenced by these intersectionalities than a binary. The authors also point out that continual study of race and leisure studies is increasingly important as the non-white U.S. population grows and “significant inequality gaps will remain in terms of access to leisure opportunities and resources” (Ibid). Other authors point out approaches that have been left out of explorations of race in leisure studies that leave holes in current knowledge. For example, a historical approach, particularly concerning residential segregation seems to be lacking (Gomez, 1999), as does spatial analysis of park/nature access in relation to race (Taleai, 2014).

This literature criticizing race in leisure studies is also important in that data collection on race through leisure studies is (as I will discuss in the analysis section) the only way the NPS gets its hard data on visitor race/ethnicity. Therefore, framed in a certain way, the entire premise that the NPS needs to attract a more racially and ethnically diverse visitor base is rooted in this method of study. It is not invalid; in fact, I think it is important that this sort of data is collected. It only seems principled, however, that the importance of the data collected is matched with an equal level of scrutiny. Additionally I do not claim to fix or further repair these holes of knowledge in a

significant way through my study; I only hope that awareness of them makes this research less subjective and erroneous.

Wilderness, Nature, and Society in Geographic Thought

In conventional public discourse surrounding nature and wilderness in relation to humans and culture, the two are considered both separate and opposite, having as little in common with each other as possible, physically or conceptually. The classic example of this dichotomy in the American psyche is the familiar idea of going “out” into the wilderness (thus away from the home) in order to escape from society and “reconnect” with the essence of who we are outside of it, and ultimately find comfort and serenity (Cronon, 1995). ‘Reconnect’ is a misleading term; it barely scratches the surface of scholarship on the relationship between wilderness and society, nature and humans, and a background of contention over the truth of this generally accepted idea of separateness.

The geographic concepts of landscape, place, and space are important to define before diving deeper into the culture and nature intersection because in and upon these terms is where this intersection plays out (Matthews, 2004). Mitchell (2000, as cited in Matthews, 2004) defines landscape as both “a work (it is the product of human labor)” and “something that does work (it acts as a social agent in the further development of a place”. In other words, landscape is both created by and the creator of social forces (i.e. culture). To use national park creation as a relevant example, “the decision to preserve or conserve something is always human and is [...] made on the basis of attached values of an economic, social, political and scientific nature” (Meadows, 2004, from Matthews 2004), which influence human behavior towards and within those parks. National parks are places created within spaces because spaces are the “dimensions within which

activities happen and things are shaped”, while places are created through “the involvement of people as emotional beings in the physical world [...] place is very much a human construct” (Rose & Unwin, 2004 from Matthews, 2004). These fairly abstract geographic concepts are important to grasp because this paper will look at the National Park Service as a landscape that (by definition) changes throughout history and both affects and is affected by cultural heritage. One further terminology clarification is the difference between nature and wilderness. Nature as defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary is the physical world and everything in it not made by people. Wilderness, on the other hand is often defined as “beyond the influence of human activity” or “unspoilt nature” (Meadows, 2004 from Matthews, 2004, p. 306). The idea behind this definition, however, is paradoxical; the idea that wilderness is nature untouched by humans is a *human* construct. In more geographic, Lefebvrian terms it is “a production of space” (Smith, 1984, as cited in Matthews, 2004, p. 243), a process executed and perceived differently throughout history. The concept of wilderness only came about at “the fateful juncture at which people removed themselves from nature” (Coates, 1998 as quoted in Meadows, 2004, p.306) and is revealing of “our habitual thinking of the world in binary terms” (Meadows, 2004 as cited in Matthews, 2004, p.307).

While conversations about humans and nature are broad in content and number and have been present arguably for all of human history, the self-reflective conversation in modern academia about wilderness and society began in the 1950s and 1960s. As Michael Barbour aptly states, during this period of time “fragmentation was in the air, pervading the American psyche [...] activities of ecologists of the fifties mirrored a revolution in American culture at large” that included race, political establishment, etc.

(Barbour, 1995 as cited in Cronon, 1995, p. 249). These conversations, which were widely public, included fresh doubt and fear about human interactions with nature (i.e. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*) and renewed beliefs of the sacredness and purity of wilderness (i.e. *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey). However, the conversation most relevant to this study is that of questioning the separation of civilized society and wilderness at all, and the realized and unrealized implications of doing so.

In Roderick Nash's influential 1965 book *Wilderness and the American Mind* he argues the idea that wilderness was not appreciated as good or something worth saving until fairly recently with the rise of urbanization, largely through Romanticism and Primitivism movements. In ideas about wilderness that predated the Romantic era, the role of Christianity cannot be emphasized enough in the shaping of American views. Negative views of the wilderness were formed and enhanced by the "prevailing view of wilderness as the symbol of anarchy and evil to which the Christian was unalterably opposed" (Nash, 2001, p. 34). Many settlers and westward expanders evoked Christian language, such as describing domestication and utilization of a plot of land as 'creating a garden of Eden', or the famous 'Manifest Destiny' to describe the evangelical, systematic conquering of western, wild places. From the first European settlement on the east coast until the early-mid 1800s, "constant exposure to wilderness gave rise to fear and hatred on the part of those who had to fight it for survival and success [...] It was their children and grandchildren, removed from a wilderness condition, who began to sense its ethical and aesthetic values" (Ibid, p. 43). These children and grandchildren were of the generation that shifted the US population from rural to urban; by the 1890 census, over one third of the country lived in urban areas, and a larger than ever proportion of those

were in cities of over 100,000 people (U.S. Census, 2014). Life in cities at the time was not often pleasant, and this fact combined with the correlated rise of popularity of primitivism, or the belief that happiness and well-being proportionally decreased along with the increase in degrees of civilization, led to the popularity of wilderness as an ideal. Additionally, many of these urbanites were the very people who were the intellectuals, writers, and other people of culture who perpetuated the originally European Romanticism in the United States.

Interestingly, Christianity was evoked in the reasoning behind the importance of wilderness to a similar degree of which it had been to prove its evilness. In this new perspective, “the immensity and grandeur of wild nature suggested similar qualities of the Creator” (Nash, 2001, p. 58). Indeed, nature became a place to be in the peace and quiet of God’s creation and thus Himself. Ironically wilderness was now the ‘garden of Eden’ and the formerly frightening, stark, and uninhabited places became cathedrals made not by man, but by God himself. For Romantics, it proved popular to go and visit these wild places to have a transcendental experience and then return home to write or create art about them. This is an important point because it demonstrates that while there was a shift in social psyche relating to wilderness, a few brief decades of enthusiasm did not eradicate centuries of disdain and fear. The result was a new awareness and appreciation of wilderness (although not even this was purely positive) among a few, often elite and urban, groups of Americans and generally the same negative feelings and tendencies in the rest of the population (Nash, 2001).

Another important figure in the conversation about the relationship between American society and nature is environmental historian William Cronon. Several ideas

presented in the famed essay “The Trouble with Wilderness” have dominated the conversation since its publication in 1995. He reinforces that the work of many scholars has “yielded abundant evidence that ‘nature’ is not nearly so natural as it seems [...] instead it is a profoundly human construction” (Cronon, 1995, p. 25). Even further, he argues, we cannot “suppose that wilderness can be the solution to our culture’s problematic relationships with the nonhuman world, for wilderness itself is no small part of the problem” (Ibid, p. 70). In other words, in viewing wilderness as apart from and free of societal problems, society allows itself to freely manifest those very problems in the space we consider to be wilderness.

Cronon debunks an important modern myth about wilderness relating to race and class: the myth that it is raceless and classless, and therefore a place free of prejudice. This myth that wilderness is not burdened by societal problems like race and class stems directly from the common idea that wilderness is definitively separate from society, thus its problems - and its origins are highly influential in how wilderness is generally viewed today. Like others before him, Cronon explains that at the end of the 19th century in the United States the concept of the frontier and its masculine, conquering essence was threatened by increased urbanization. From this threat blossomed a “frontier nostalgia” perpetrated not by those living in the relative ‘wild’ frontier but by the powerful, nearly unanimously white, male, and upper class people who feared the loss of the harsh, unforgiving, and character-building landscape that they believed had made them powerful and successful in the first place. This frontier nostalgia became “an important vehicle for expressing a peculiarly bourgeois form of antimodernism” and through it wilderness became a place for “the frontier experience [...] a place of recreation and

landscape of choice for elite tourists” (Cronon, 1995, p. 78). Elitism expressed through presence in nature is identified in another relevant conversation in the discipline of Geography about urban parks.

Urban Parks in Geographic Discourse

Another important scholarly conversation relevant to this research is that about urban parks, specifically how urban parks simultaneously manifest and mitigate racial inequity. Research about urban parks can be difficult because of their inherent heterogeneity - urban parks can take many forms and serve many functions for different people (Wolch et al, 2014; Swanwick, Carys, 2003). The word ‘park’ traces back etymologically to mean captive or enclosed nature (Olwig 1996 as quoted in Byrne 2009) which to a certain extent alludes to its exclusivity. The idea, however, is considered a modern one that some scholars think stems from the weakening of traditional beliefs through the rise of egalitarianism from the American and French revolutions, industrialization, and urbanization (Runte, 1997). Others believe urban parks were created as a spatial fix in response to the crisis of capitalism (Birge-Liberman, 2010). Moreover, only fairly recently “has it [park] come to mean both protection and public access” (Ibid, p. 2). Previous research on urban parks or urban green spaces has existed since the 1970s. Both within and outside of geographic scholarship, most of this research has focused on history and ideology of parks, park access and utilization, parks as a part of sustainable urban livelihoods, economic benefits of parks, and parks in relation to health and urban well-being (Byrne and Wolch, 2009). In the past 20 years or so, urban park research has incorporated race and the socio-cultural inscription on place, at least partly as a result of the rise of Environmental Justice thought in the 1980s. New ideas

have arisen about how cultural politics of race and nature and the concept of ‘the park’ itself “may play a stronger role in delimiting park-use than has previously been recognized” (Byrne, 2012, p. 1). Therefore it is an important factor in determining the (non)equity present in and enacted through the research subtopics identified by Byrne and Wolch in 2009.

There is ample evidence proving that the presence of an urban park brings health, wellbeing, and economic vitality to residents of adjacent neighborhoods. The ecosystems of parks combat urban ills such as air pollution, noise, temperature, and water irregularity (Wolch et al., 2014). Access to green space has been linked with an increase in an individual’s physical activity and decrease in risk for obesity, chronic disease, and mortality rates, and the lack of access has been linked with equally negative and opposite effects (Ogden, Carroll & Flegal, 2008, Sallis et al, 2012; Hill & Peters, 1998, as cited in Wolch et al 2014). Additionally, the mental health and, for children, developmental benefits of green space are important for urban residents (Lee and Maheswaran, 2011 as cited in Wolch et al 2009). Parks and green space are associated with higher property values and improved socialization (Wolch et al. 2014).

Scholarship also demonstrates that race is a particularly polarizing factor in park accessibility and its resulting benefits. Many studies have shown that racial inequity in access exists (Byrne et al., 2009; Carlson et al., 2010; Boone et al. 2009). Byrne 2012) cites previous leisure scholars’ ‘classes of factors’ that are the hypothesized basis for people of color’s disproportionately low use of parks: personal/internal constraints (fear of crime, interest, mental/physical health), social constraints (family responsibilities, lack of partners), structural constraints (lack of transportation, money, time), and institutional

constraints (user fees, programming). Discrimination cannot be ignored as a factor in the disparity created by “perceived hostility [that] lead people of color to avoid parks where they feel unwelcome” (Ibid, p. 7). Byrne is also ahead of scholarly colleagues in recognizing the overarching “historical and cultural context of park provision and its role in shaping park supply and the character of parks” (Ibid, p.8) and the predominant whiteness of spaces that contain parks. The whiteness of space can have a dual, inverse effect on urban parks: people of color are repelled from these spaces for reasons previously listed, and white people come to understand people of color generally as outsiders in natural areas (Katz and Kirby, 1991 as cited in Byrne and Wolch, 2009). The inferential result of racial ‘place coding’ in space, then, is that people of color generally have less access to green spaces or do not take advantage of it as often as whites, and therefore do not reap the benefits that come with access to these “socio-natural spaces” (Byrne and Wolch, 2009).

The conversations about both wilderness and nature’s place in American culture are so important because the resulting modern (mis)conceptions are predictive of the relationship today between nature and marginalized groups of people in the United States. It is not difficult to trace the connections between the historical formations of nature-society relationships and the formations they take today. From nature becoming a playground of the bourgeois, whether in pleasant urban park as a benefit of privilege or in a remote ‘wilderness’ as a sort of tribute to times and places past where the privileged had once roughed it (but no longer had to), to these same forms of nature being coded as white spaces and thus being relatively devoid of people of color, the path is straight and clear. I will discuss this path as it relates to the National Park Service more in the analysis

section. First, though, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the agency's background and culture.

Background: A Brief History of the National Park Service

It is important to have a full understanding of the history of the United States' relationship to nature and wilderness and the resulting creation and *changing* of the National Park Service (NPS). In this section I will summarize the history of the NPS. While certainly well evolved, the place of wilderness in both the American psyche and geography is still contentious. This summary will include the most well-known points of this historical narrative, but I will also consciously tell it through a lens of race and ethnicity and an urban lens. Neither are usually included in this story. One reason for this that is important to acknowledge is that this slice of American history has been predominantly told by white men, noticeably more so than American history in general. Indeed, the major scholars in this field are William Cronon, Roderick Nash, Alfred Runte, Ken Burns, to name a few. This acknowledgement is a nod, albeit an important nod, to the debate over historical objectivity, or the idea that "bias, omission, selection, and interpretation [...] make all historical representations dependent on the perspective of the individual historian" (Little, 2007). This is important to keep in mind when considering the history of wilderness and the NPS written by these prominent scholars and my reiteration and supplementation of them.

This summary will cover a time span of about 150 years divided into several loose eras. The first era will delve into the second half of the 19th century and the figures and events important to the national park idea, followed by the second, which is first thirty years of the 20th century. The third era covers the formative years of NPS expansion and

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experimentation during the 1930s through 1950s, followed by the fourth era of environmentalism, polarization, and the rise of Environmental Justice from the late 1950s through the 1980s.

Part I: Origins of the National Park Idea (1864-1900)

The birth of the national park idea and the modern American National Park Service officially began on June 30th, 1864 when President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act. It was proposed by California Senator John Conness stating that the area known as Yosemite would be protected by the state for recreation purposes (Burns, 2009). As was the truth for all of the earlier established national parks, “grand, monumental scenery was the physical catalyst” (Runte, 1997, p. 5), but the Romantic’s intense adoration and awe for this scenery and the resulting publicity was the push of human capital that ultimately led to legislation. This legislation is important to the history of the NPS because of the foundational role it plays, but the date of the legislation itself turns out to be telling of the cultural atmosphere the NPS was born out of and shaped by for decades to come.

Why did the Yosemite Grant Act, a piece of legislation that protected a tract of land from development that most members of Congress (most of whom were certainly in favor of using natural resources) had never seen, get enough political backing to pass during a time of such upheaval as the Civil War? Prior to 1864, all natural wonders European-Americans came across had been appreciated as such yet also at times exploited economically to an extent that the wonder was damaged or made private and inaccessible. The prime example of this was Niagara Falls, which by the 1830s was a tourist attraction and by 1860, essentially inaccessible without payment (Runte, 1997).

European tourists who visited Niagara Falls were known to proclaim disdain for this American profiteering of such natural wonders, perhaps most famously in Alexander Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. These European judgments of American practices stung; after all, the painful and messy split of the United States from England was less than a century earlier and cultural tensions were still high as far as who was 'cultured' or not (Nash, 2001). As a result of these criticisms, momentum was building to save face and stop such exploitation through some sort of legislative protection. Cultural tensions of the time, of course, were not only transcontinental. The Civil War was testing the idea of American democracy and whether the nation could even exist cohesively in a political and cultural way, and it was on the forefront of the public mind. In the face of these two attacks on American culture, one from Europe and one from within, bastions of the American ideal were eager to solidify something that was proof of American greatness, even superiority. This included President Lincoln, who set aside time to sign the Yosemite Grant Act in the 4th grueling year of the Civil War to demonstrate "a distinctiveness" and "godliness in nature that Americans saw in their society, [and to] serve as a counterpoint to European claims that the New World was inferior in every way" (Rothman, 1994, as cited in Runte, 1997, p. 32).

Additionally, the belief during this time period in the health benefits of recreating or exercising in the outdoors cannot be ignored. The idea of the public, urban park gained popularity for this very purpose in urban areas during the mid-1800s. The most famous example is New York's Central Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and opened in 1857 (Wheeler, 2015). Olmsted was a supporter of setting aside these tracts of wilderness (he was a supporter of Yosemite and in later years he would be a key player in creating

Everglades National Park) for recreation purposes due to their “favorable influence on ‘the health and vigor of men’ and their ‘intellect’” (Nash, 2001, p.106). These words of Olmsted, a prominent public figure, reflected the public’s fear that urbanization was dulling the bodies and minds of the citizenry, particularly men. This belief was added to by a particular Scottish-born naturalist and activist by the name of John Muir, who rose to fame through his activities to protect and promote Yosemite and many other environmental causes throughout his life. Muir was well known for his spiritual interpretations of the nature he loved, and encouraged people to find God in ‘nature’s cathedrals’ rather than man-made ones (Cronon, 1995; Nash, 2001). His captivating personality and fervor were essential in the popular rise of the spiritual value of national parks.

In this period of upheaval, the creation of a park like Yosemite was an effort to establish a piece of cultural heritage that the country could draw strength from and unite around, as well as moving towards restoring the character of the American people (but mostly white men) that was perceived as fading among urbanites. The creation of this place established another, darker precedent that the NPS would continue to follow in various ways for decades to come: the displacement of native people, overwhelmingly American Indians, from the land they had called home for hundreds if not thousands of years. In the case of Yosemite, the tribe displaced was an offshoot of the Mono Lake Piute’s called the Awahneechee, who had lived in and considered sacred the Yosemite for thousands of years. They were first driven out in the 1850s by California State Militia (who controlled the park when it was established) during the Mariposa Wars, and again

several times into the twentieth century until they were entirely located on reservations near Fresno, California (Mazel, 2000; Burns, 2009).

The next significant event in NPS history occurred less than a decade after Yosemite State Park's establishment: on March 1st, 1872, the 2+ million acre Yellowstone National Park was created in northwestern Wyoming (Nash, 2001, p.108). Several aspects of this designation rationalizations were the same as those of Yosemite. The preservation (which in Yosemite had been primarily for the sequoia trees, waterfalls, and granite faces and in Yellowstone for the geysers, hot springs, and canyon) was for the purpose not of wilderness protection in and of itself but the protection of these wonders from damaging or access-limiting exploitation by profiteers (although this still happened in various ways). In other words, the reason Yellowstone was set aside was still monumentalism and America's claims to antiquity that emerged from the country's "cultural inferiority complex vis-a-vis the Old World" (Peterson, 1980). Another similarity was Yellowstone had several key explorers that brought back descriptions laden with nationalist and religious language that peaked public interest in the place when they were published in Eastern newspapers (Runte, 1997). The other similarity was the displacement of people that park creation decreed; the Nez Perce were driven from the park to a reservation after the superintendent promised the frightful public (American citizen tourists) that no Native Americans were in the park (Burns, 2009).

The most obvious difference, however, was in the name: Yellowstone *National* Park. Yosemite was in the state of California when it was signed into law, and the federal government had set a precedent through handing over authority to the state government. Yellowstone, however, was created when Wyoming was still a territory, therefore the

management of the park could not be transferred over to a lower power and it remained under federal jurisdiction. At the time the semantic difference was a small technicality and not much was thought of it. Only much later, when the NPS was more established and popular, was this name lauded as historically significant (Burns, 2009).

Yellowstone's establishment was not the only event that set NPS precedent in 1872; that same year the case *Hutchings v. Low* appeared before the Supreme Court. James Hutchings had been an early settler of Yosemite Valley in the mid-1850s, and had done a great deal to bring the area to the attention of Easterners. Hutchings also exploited the valley and used its hype to turn a profit. When he was ordered off the land once it became a park, he challenged the decision and brought it to the highest court, where it was determined that the government had a right to set aside land. (Runte, 1990). Essentially this ruling became the legal base upon which national parks were, and are, constitutional in the United States.

Thus far the history describing the earliest days of the National Park System has been primarily cultural. However, the role of the economics and American capitalism of the time cannot be ignored in their role shaping the national parks. There are two major ways this factored in: the development of the railroad and the concept of 'worthless land'. Railroads, specifically the Northern Pacific Railroad in Yellowstone, actually were involved in the park's creation so far as endorsing its creation. It is not difficult to see why: the railroads, especially if they built a stop directly in a national park (which they did), stood to gain financially. The parks that were extensively described in Eastern media became extremely popular destinations for upper-middle to upper class tourists. A popular railroad advertising slogan of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was "See

America First”, alluding to the fact that during this period most travelers of the upper classes (which made up most all travelers) would usually opt to go to Europe to become worldly and cultured. This advertisement campaign encouraged the elitist take on travel and attempts at becoming cultured, but guilt-tripped tourists into spending their money and assisting the economy of their home country and not on a continent that distained the United States (Burns, 2009). Without the railroads, the national park idea would almost certainly not have become as popular as it did nor embed itself so deeply and early on in the American psyche.

The other economic premise that allowed the earlier parks to even be established in the first place was the ‘worthless lands’ argument (Runte, 1997). During this time period the United States was in the heart of the Gilded Age, a time of rapid economic and population growth (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015), which translated into high demands on natural resources such as timber, mining products, and land for agriculture and grazing. It was generally unheard of to not take advantage of these newly discovered and untouched natural resources, and it certainly would be political suicide to suggest doing so. As Runte aptly states, “although Americans as a whole admit to the ‘beauty’ of the national parks, rarely have perceptions based on emotion overcome the urge to acquire wealth” (Ibid, p. 49). Therefore, it was important for members of the public who wanted these natural wonders preserved and the politicians who would actually wield their power to do so prove that these lands were ‘worthless’ in the sense that they could not in any way be taken advantage of to acquire wealth (the tourist economy was not substantial enough compared to that of natural resources to require argument). This was done so in Yosemite by putting aside such a small percentage of sequoia trees and grazable land (the

rest of the preserved park was useless cliffs and mountains) that there was no way its absence from the natural resource economy would actually have any effect. Similarly in Yellowstone, while the amount of land set aside was large, scanty surveyor jobs and its altitude, weather, and predisposition of fruitless, husbandry-killing geysers and hot pools allowed for the establishment of the park. Several other prominent parks were established in this vein, such as Crater Lake in 1902 (for its lack of agricultural land, ensured by the carefully set boundaries) and Mt. Rainier in 1899 (only the mountain, none of the timber-filled surrounding lowlands) (Runte, 1997). The ‘worthless lands’ argument of the NPS’ early history is important because it so clearly reveals the majority mindset of the American people not as much conservationist or wilderness enthusiast, but more monumentalist, nationalistic and capitalistic. For better or worse, this mindset created conditions that produced the origins of what would officially become the National Park Service in 1916.

Part II: Testing the Idea, Foundation of the NPS, and the Early Years (1900-1930)

By the early 20th century, preservation of land from private development for the benefit of current and future Americans was already on its way to becoming a mainstay of American culture. This did not mean, however, that the idea of what preservation or conservation meant was becoming less disputed; the opposite was true. During this time various controversies arose (some making more news than others) such as the removal of the Blackfeet people from Glacier National Park in Montana over hunting rights (Native American Netroots, 2010). No event, though, is so significant in the fight over the role of conservation and ultimately predictive of the continuous internal struggle in the NPS as that of the damming of Hetch Hetchy (Rothman, 2004 as cited in Runte, 1997). Hetch

Hetchy is a valley in Yosemite National Park that according to Muir and others of the time (before its damming authorization in 1913) was comparable in beauty to the famous Yosemite Valley. After the 1906 earthquake that devastated San Francisco and exposed the shoddiness of the city's water system and supply, it became evident that the city needed to obtain its water elsewhere. That elsewhere was the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and San Francisco needed a reservoir that was determined to be located at Hetch Hetchy. The resulting conflict "shattered the illusion that only one approach to conservation existed" (Ibid) and the two sides argued bitterly for nearly twenty years over whether to save the irreplaceable majesty of the valley or use the resources owned by the government to provide its citizens with a human need (Runte, 1997). The famous controversy concluded when the President signed Hetch Hetchy to the City of San Francisco.

The controversy and its conclusion had several effects important to the NPS. One was the division of people, both park staff and (non)advocates, into two camps of conservation. One could be pro-preservation, or believe that land set aside should be as untouched and 'natural' as possible. This view would evolve over the next century as parks became recognized for their ecological value and the environmental movements pointed out human damage on natural settings and began to advocate for lands as human-less as possible. If not pro-preservation, one was pro-management and generally agreed with utilitarian philosophy of "the greatest good for the greatest number" (Pinchot as cited in Runte, 1997, p. 70), which involved advocating for the protection of land along with the sustainable use of its resources. A second effect of the Hetch Hetchy Dam was the realization by preservationists that the lack of an agency overseeing the protection of

parks and their natural wonders left them vulnerable to ephemeral politics. This realization, combined with the increasing publicity and popularity of the parks from the railroads, led to the 1916 founding of the National Park Service, “an agency fully committed to the principles of esthetic as opposed to utilitarian conservation” (Runte, 1997, p. 83). The new agency was housed under the Department of the Interior, not the Department of Agriculture as the U.S. Forest Service was since its establishment in 1905 (the Forest Service, which was to utilitarian conservation as the NPS was to preservationism, classified trees and minerals like crops). The NPS and the USFS were (and are) similar in that they protected land from private use, but their distinctiveness is important in that the NPS defined itself as what the USFS was not - preservationist - and that distinction determined NPS development into modernity (Runte, 1997, Nash, 2001).

While Hetch Hetchy may have done the most to establish the NPS as an agency, an act passed under President Roosevelt ten years earlier in 1906 did much more to expand the agency and upheld “the continuing influence of cultural nationalism” (Runte, 1997, p.71). It was the Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities, commonly known as the Antiquities Act. It states that the President can declare “historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government to be national monuments” (NPS, 2015). The bill quickly came into being parallel with the creation of Mesa Verde National Monument (later, National Park) after the ancient archeological site was ‘discovered’ by European Americans, underwent an unauthorized excavation, and was partially looted of some of its artifacts. These simultaneous events marked an important turn in NPS culture; suddenly parks were not only for monumental scenery, but

also places that set aside or commemorated the cultural aspects of United States history. During Roosevelt's presidency and several others' following, the power of the executive order was wielded several times to save an area from immediate threat of privatization or degradation, or just as a precautionary action. The Antiquities Act also became known for presidents' liberal interpretation of it. "Historic or scientific interest" was broadly interpreted, and various natural landmarks (the Grand Canyon, for example) that did have culture attached to them, but not as their centerpiece of NPS significance, were set aside for their "unique geologic qualities" (Runte, 1997; Burns, 2009). The Antiquities Act was responsible for strengthening the park service through the quick creation of a variety of parks over the next few years and beyond. As far as the formation and origin of NPS culture, the way sites were designated national monuments is extremely revealing and significant: "rarely had the nation so openly revealed that its efforts to protect the uniqueness of the West had been strongly motivated by the search for cultural identity [...] dwellings of prehistoric Indians suffice[d] for the absence of Greek and Roman ruins in the New World" (Runte, 1997, p. 73).

With so much preceding it, August 25th, 1916, the date President Wilson signed the National Park Service Act into being (Runte, 1997, p. 103) was clearly only one step of the national park idea. However, although there was much from the past influencing the NPS after its official creation, the activities of the new agency in the following decades would be influential in shaping its culture into the present. Two outdoor enthusiasts, wealthy former businessman Stephen Mather and young lawyer Horace Albright, served as the NPS's first director and director's assistant, respectively. They are well regarded as the fathers of the NPS, and while the idea was not theirs, their "original

contribution was the institutionalization [...] within the political and legal framework of the federal government” (Ibid, p.102). Mather had three main goals in the early years of the NPS: create more national parks, make parks more accessible, and promote the parks as a true network, not a random collection of beautiful places (Burns, 2009). His emphasis on the NPS’ national economic benefit helped by enhancing marketing, creating further relationships with railroads, and generating political and financial support for new parks. He was successful, by most measures: he raised the number of park visitors from about 325,000 in the NPS’ founding year to just over 1,000,000 in 1920 (NPS, 2015).

Mather wanted the American public to feel a sense of ownership over the parks. He was centered on creating them as a place of recreation and spectacle, drivers of an economically robust tourism industry. During his time as director he appointed the superintendents of all the parks, ensuring that they would all be run under his vision. He created the iconic park ranger position to staff and patrol the parks, which recruited men aged between 21 and 40 with good character, physique, and a certain ‘toughness’ and authority about them. Their uniforms, consistent from park to park, were modeled after the cavalry units that had sporadically looked after the parks during the previous fifty years. Through these rangers Mather also established popular educational programs such as nature walks and campfire talks, which are the origins of modern NPS interpretation (Burns, 2009). The park ranger, therefore, was established as an authority figure of both park knowledge and rule enforcement. Mather’s national parks, thus the early NPS itself, was a place for people, focused on their needs and wants and not focused on ecological preservation. In the 1920s and 30s preserving wildlife in the national parks became

popular idea, but certainly not due to their ecosystemic value. Preserving wildlife was a way to preserve better hunting grounds for the Eastern elite; Yellowstone was the favorite of future President Teddy Roosevelt, for example. This more rounded, multifaceted approach to national parks began to include the preservation of old buildings and American Indian settlements (sometimes with actual displaced Natives performing because they were considered a part of the original landscape, not because the NPS was moving towards cultural inclusiveness). Instead of solely stunning natural landscapes, the NPS strived to preserve “a sense of history itself, as recalled through broad expanses of native, living landscapes” (Runte, 1997, p.107). It was a new direction that had not been a part of the original idea; and for better or worse, a sign of progress for the NPS.

Another important occurrence under Mather was the establishment of Acadia National Park in 1919, the first Eastern national park. It set a precedent not only for being Eastern (although the stigma of being less legitimate than other parks due to its non-western location stuck), but also in that it was the first national park created from privately donated land. Previously, all of the national parks were established on land that was previously owned by the government, federal or state. Acadia, previously Desert Island, had been purchased piece by piece by residents (including the largest donor, the Rockefellers) who eventually wanted the land to be preserved and then donated to the federal government. The precedent of parks created from purchased or repurchased private land, primarily in the East at during the first half of the 20th century, was important in its timing - little if any land in the East was already claimed, and the West was soon to follow.

A dark side of NPS development in the East, however, came out of the fact that there was not much uninhabited, 'wild' land to make parks out of. That meant that parks were created through processes similar to that of Acadia, or, as in the case of several famous parks like Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah, by forcible removal. Of course, removal of people from land to create parks was not new because this happened to American Indian populations in essentially every Western park. The difference in these parks was that the people removed were not only American Indian but also poor, white Appalachian families. Their removal, however approved or disapproved of depending on differing opinions, was much more public and documented than any other human removal by the NPS. Because the white occupants were unquestionably viewed as having legitimate ownership of the land they were removed from, it was a controversial action that shed some negative light on the NPS. However, most of the negative opinion remained regional and the NPS remained generally popular in the United States.

Private NPS support in the form of organizations also came about during this time period. Most notably was the National Parks Association (today the National Parks Conservation Association, NPCA), established in 1919 by Robert Sterling Yard, a conservationist friend of Mather and both other NPS administrators and prominent conservation-minded individuals. The purpose of the organization was to provide a "private, nonpartisan watchdog for national park standards" (Runte, 1997, p. 132). Yard was a strict preservationist and known to openly favor the big, Western parks over newer, less traditional parks. While it was personal opinion, it mattered because that opinion contributed to the organization's (and more broadly the NPS') cultural affinity for defining a 'real' park as one modeled after and similar to those like Yosemite and

Yellowstone. For example, the establishment of Everglades was extremely drawn out and contentious due to the traditionalist views of people with authority deciding what counted as a national park (Runte, 1997; Burns, 2009).

Part III: The CCC and the Baby Boomers (1930s-early 1950s)

As the 1920s progressed, a modern invention that changed the course of the country forever had no less of an impact on the NPS: the automobile. Pre-automobile, the upper middle and wealthy classes traveled to national parks by train, but as the car became the recreational transport of choice it became a major influence on how people (and how many of them) traveled to parks and how parks were designed. ‘Sagebrushing’, the practice of luxury auto camping on the side of the road, became very popular in the 1920s and 1930s (Runte, 1997) and spiked the number of national park visitors higher from 1 million in 1920 to over 3 million by 1930 (NPS Statistical Database, 2015). While some preservationists worried over the rapidly growing number of visitors and presence of infrastructure (both expanded roadways for automobiles and restaurants, lodges etc. for people once they arrived), the majority of them “embraced the automobile, as they had earlier the railroad, as another opportunity to bolster the parks popularity” (Runte, 1997, p. 156). Indeed, roads became in design and practice the best way to see the parks, with park roads being situated to always have the best vistas. Additionally, Mather lobbied for a National Park Highway that would loosely connect all the major Western parks of the time (Burns, 2009). In the coming decades, it would become clear that popularity was not a problem: by 1950 there were close to 33 million NPS visitors, and between one and two percent arrived in a park by a non-automobile method (NPS Statistical Database, 2015; Runte 1997). The fact that cars became popular in parks is not

surprising because of their rise in everyday American middle-class life. The overwhelming presence of cars in the NPS is telling in two ways. First, that the NPS became integrated into American culture through its close connection with the car; national parks became the places to go in order to use your car for longer recreational trips. Second, the fact that the overwhelming majority of park visitors arrived in cars reveals something about the social class of park visitors. While the car democratized the park experience as far as accessibility in relation to what it had been before, it certainly did not include the ‘everybody’ the parks were meant for. In the first half of the 20th century many Americans did not own cars, and many of these people were urban, working class - and apparently, based on the statistics of car-oriented NPS destination travel, not a part of this recreation trend.

Expansion of the parks during the early mid-20th century could not all have happened through increased recreation, however. When the Great Depression struck in 1929, few Americans were thinking about vacation and park visitation stagnated (NPS Statistical Database, 2015). However, the national parks were anything but on the back of the government’s mind. FDR was a staunch supporter of the parks, saying “there is nothing so American as our national parks [...] scenery and wildlife are native, and the idea behind the parks is native. It is in brief that the country belongs to the people. They are not for the rich alone” (Burns, 2009). While no new parks were established for several years, FDR’s desire to see them improve and his need to help the suffering citizens kept the NPS going. The relative budget for the national parks skyrocketed. In 1933 as part of FDR’s New Deal, the work public relief program called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was established and ran for nine years. It operated in national

parks along with other public lands, and it was responsible for employing 3 million men over this time period (Salmond, 1967) and pumping 218 million dollars into the NPS. The CCC is important not only in its responsibility for a substantial amount of new park infrastructure construction, but also in that it introduced a generation of young people to the NPS, including the cultural significance of the national parks. It was in many ways a democratizing expansion of the traditional NPS audience (Burns, 2009).

After the Great Depression until a pause during World War II, and then through the rest of the 1940s, the NPS expanded its kind of parks and scope of influence broadly. While the original idea of monumental landscape preservation was still at the core of the NPS and present in all it did, some new parks set aside during these years noticeably lacked a monumental quality and were deemed important for other reasons. FDR, along with Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and NPS directors Horace Albright and Arno Cammerer, signed executive orders to include twenty military themed parks and battlefield sites as well as twelve historical sites. While some were monumental physically, these designations were significant in that all were monumental culturally and none were naturally monumental, or if they happened to be so that was not the reason they were set aside. Some were like other parks in that they were rural; many, however, were urban including the Statue of Liberty and the National Mall (Burns, 2009) and many were to the east of the Mississippi River, breaking the unofficial standard that parks were intrinsically western. These new sites were a call to nationalism and patriotism as the country went into WWII and then subsequently recovered from it. Also during this time period the value of the flora and fauna of the parks were recognized for their intrinsic value, and Albright established the Wildlife Division in order to protect it. Under this

mentality parks that focused primarily on wildlife were established, such as Everglades National Park in 1934 (NPCA, 2015). Other NPS related public officials and conservation-minded citizens, including Yard and famed ecologist Aldo Leopold, established the Wilderness Society to protect lands from development, even at times from the NPS' development-oriented strategy itself.

Another development in the 1930s that is significant to the history of national parks in urban areas is the Recreational Demonstration Area program. The program was established in 1934 as a part of the New Deal's Federal Emergency Relief Administration under the Land Program Committee, and the committee worked through the Department of the Interior and specifically with the NPS for most projects. The purpose of the program was to purchase, as director Cammerer stated "unusable lands of no economic worth" (Williss, 1987) (note the presence of the 'worthless lands' argument) that were suited to recreation and rehabilitate them to be recreation sites, with the results being jobs and healthy environments for public recreation. The NPS was responsible for choosing and developing the sites, most of which ended up being in or near urban areas, "purposely located where they would be accessible to large numbers of people" (NPS, 1938, as cited in Williss, 1987). After their completion the control of these recreation sites was transferred to either the NPS or to the relevant state park unit, resulting in the creation of several new, urban national parks. However, as the 1940s progressed funding became scarcer, and by the mid-1950s all recreation demonstration areas were transferred to state control (Williss, 1987). While only inhabiting a couple of decades of NPS history, the recreational demonstration areas were extremely important in that they exposed hundreds of thousands of previously unexposed people to a national park,

whether they knew it or not. It also set a precedent in other parks and projects of the time in that it brought the federal agency dedicated to preserving culturally important areas to where people actually lived, and moved away from the relatively inaccessible, traditional park model.

The increasing societal recognition of the benefits of recreation was clearly not lost on the NPS, and this was further demonstrated throughout the late 1930s and 1940s. In 1936 Congress passed the Park, Parkway, and Recreational Study Act which assigned the NPS the task of surveying land across the country, rating its recreation potential. In 1941, the NPS published the resulting report titled *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States*. It detailed the need for U.S. citizens in an industrialized society to have proper recreation opportunities and the responsibility of the government to provide space for them, and where some of those spaces were. In its plan of action, it cites the need for urban populations to have access to neighborhood playgrounds within a half mile to a mile of every resident, parks that were essentially beautiful and numerous enough for all populations (including the poor) to enjoy, protection of urban waterways from pollution, parkways along urban waterways, and bigger, more ‘natural’ parks within 25 miles of all urban areas (NPS, 1941). These recreation themed efforts marked the beginning of the NPS’ involvement in the planning process, which would continue through the present. Although some of the first NPS steps towards involving urban spaces in the system occurred earlier, such as the 1933 addition of the National Capital Parks in Washington D.C., this recreation report would result in a great expansion over the next couple of decades in NPS-operated urban facilities and those nearer to urban areas, such as national parkways, seashores, lakeshores, etc. (NPS, 2015). The involvement of the

NPS in recreation was remarkably different than its original purpose of preserving monumental nature. These natures were not necessarily monumental nor were their cultural histories always ancient enough to be compared to Greece or Rome (if the cultural aspects of these places were interpreted at all). What they did have in common, however, with the more traditional parks was their intent to benefit the American people through contact with a public natural landscape. How open these places were to people who were not white and relatively well-off socioeconomically most likely depended heavily on region, location of the park, etc. There was no official policy of discrimination (through racial segregation) in the NPS since Secretary of the Interior Ickes desegregated the park service systematically through the 1930s, but it was still unofficially present as much as it was in everyday life. Even then some official segregation, such as separate cafeterias and campgrounds, were not stamped out in a few parks until the 1950s (NPS, 2015). These parts of urban NPS history are largely left out in major scholarship and cultural knowledge about the NPS, which is important for two reasons: it shows who tells these narratives and value of this history, and it shows that people of color *were* involved with the NPS, as visitors and at times, staff (Burns, 2009; Finney, 2014) despite what often appears to be true.

Part IV: The Environmental Movement and a Changing NPS (late 1950s-1980s)

After WWII, America saw a population boom and a rapid expansion of the middle class. It also saw, as a result of these trends, a boom in visitation to the national parks. In the year after the war, 1946, NPS visitors numbered at almost 21 million. By 1950 it was around 32.7 million, by 1960 71 million, and 1963 was the year the number of visitors passed 100 million (NPS Statistical Database, 2014). This visitation boom resulted in two

important things: the creation of a (large) generation that grew up going to national parks and caring about them deeply into adulthood, and a conversation within the NPS and between conservationists about damage done by the high number of visitors and potential solutions. As far as future implications for the NPS, the baby boomer audience gave the NPS a cultural stronghold that would keep them relevant and preserved for decades to come. Considering the diversity of that audience would also be important later on; while it was diverse, during the baby boom years (1946-1964, generally) there were societally imposed limitations pertaining to race and class on who was included in that audience. The idea that perhaps human presence was harmful to the parks meant to preserve the land gained more and more traction as the environmental movement blossomed in the early 1960s. Many employees in the park service were conflicted between their mission to serve the people and share the parks with them and the new preservationist push to limit the amount of human contact with these spots of preserved nature (Burns, 2009), yet there was a definite leaning towards conservation and recreation over pure preservation. Moreover, new park creation now often was not for protection only of “the ‘museum pieces’ of the American landscape” but also of “land threatened by housing developments, shopping centers, expressways, and similar forms of urban encroachment” (Runte, 1997, p.211). Dams, which were needed to provide water to exploding suburbia particularly in the Sun Belt, were no small part of this threat. Several dams were proposed in already protected natural areas, others in unprotected areas. The result was a spurt of parks (often in the form of recreation areas) to prevent their construction, although some of the dams were built anyway in a clear demonstration of preference for the conservation side of the park argument (Burns, 2009).

Whatever opinion one may have had on development vs. preservation, however, the parks in their current state were undeniably strained by the number of visitors, and especially because most were arriving by car. Infrastructure was starting to break down, and with more and more people pouring into the parks, Congress established the Mission 66 program in 1955 to get the parks ready for the NPS' 50th anniversary in 1966. The program, which was designed by the NPS director and landscape architecture influence, covered road expansion, repair, and services, and paralleled (though was not funded by) Eisenhower's Interstate Highway program. Mission 66 was responsible for the emblematic visitor center, both in construction and the provided services and interpretation. It also added over two dozen new nontraditional units. Some of these included seashores such as Cape Cod in Massachusetts and Point Reyes in California. Others were urban, such as the St. Louis Arch in Missouri and Independence Hall in Philadelphia, both of which were controversial in that they involved some removal of existing buildings and infrastructure in the name of urban renewal. The influx of funding and park improvements was clearly auto-vacation oriented and in direct opposition of the growing pro-wilderness environmental movement's goals. Additionally, Mission 66 was designed and launched quickly and semi-secretly by a few national administrators with little input from individual park superintendents and local communities that would be affected. These two facts combined are credited in part with the hastening of the environmental/wilderness preservation movement's push to pass the Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964. Mission 66 also restarted the National Historic Landmark and Register of Historic Places programs for the first time in twenty years, which invigorated NPS involvement in cultural heritage once again (Carr, 2007).

The flood of new kinds of ‘nontraditional’ parks was not met entirely with open arms. Preservationists, most notably led by Yard (head of the NPCA), strongly resisted calling the new parks ‘national’ parks because they lacked “the feeling that only by journeying west did one come face to face with nature in its most majestic, pristine, and symbolic setting” (Runte, 1997, p.211). While monumentalism was still embedded in the heart of the NPS and many of its supporters, a changing country required that it no longer was the driving principle in practice. Equity of access and increased visitation/visibility trumped landscape grandeur. This turning of the tides was particularly influenced by the two men with the most power over the NPS during this time period: Secretary of the Interior Stuart Udall (1961-69) and NPS director George Hartzog (1963-72). Both men were particularly liberal in creating ‘nontraditional’ parks including a large subsection of the urban parks, and in the late 1960s the upfront reasons for doing so were both their “ecological and historical assets” and to “bring the parks to the people, especially to the residents of the inner city who have had virtually no opportunity to enjoy [...] our national parks” (Ibid, p.233). This sentiment was a remarkable shift from previous opinion, fitting for the socially turbulent 60s and among the roots for a slow, quiet, decades-long push to get the national parks to be accessible to racial and ethnic minority groups (however flawed or misguided). The NPS went further in this direction by using the historic preservation acts to for the first time preserve sites where shameful events of United States history occurred. For example, by 1985 Manzanar, a Japanese internment camp during WWII, became a national monument (Burns, 2009).

There was however, a strong push in the opposite direction towards wilderness in the NPS during this same period and on into the 1970s. This push can be viewed as either

a reaction to the nontraditional direction and (slight) urbanization of the NPS or simply as another direction that further stretched the category of what fell under NPS jurisdiction. The argument for preservation of parks as holistic ecosystems fragile to human contact was most popular and effective in this decade (Nash, 2001). In the late 70s there was a massive public push for the preservation of large swaths of Alaska, which many preservationists considered ‘the last frontier’ (Burns, 2009; Nash, 2001). This came to fruition in 1980 when Carter signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, to the outrage of most Alaskans. The setting aside of Alaskan lands shed light on the latest urban influence on wilderness preservation and parks: that most of the support for preservation came from urban areas and was most often resisted by the rural, local communities most directly affected by it (Burns, 2009). The preservation of Alaskan lands was notable for taking the most care to preserve what it could of Native Alaskan peoples land rights, marking a shift in the awareness of race/ethnicity and civil rights in the creation and use of park lands, not to mention the rise of the movement.

Environmental Justice refers to the movement in the 1980s that “emerged as a vehicle for addressing social justice concerns and taking on the question of racism” in the mainstream environmental movement (Finney, 2014, p. xiii). Environmental Justice examines issues of exposure to environmental hazards and natural disasters, people of color’s representation in the environmental movement, and rights to environmental benefits like land access, clean air, water, etc., and recreation (Taylor 1997 as cited in Finney, 2014). While the NPS came into contact with Environmental Justice in small ways (the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 required all museums to return American Indian grave artifacts to the original grave or cultural

ancestors (NPS, 2015)), it mostly did not because its interactions with outside groups were limited primarily to mainstream environmental groups that were generally white. Modern relevancy initiatives, however, are shortening this distance between the NPS and direct work with environmental justice. With knowledge of relevant scholarship and history, I explore modern NPS initiatives about relevancy and racial inclusion.

Methodology

I conducted qualitative research through primary document analysis and in-depth expert interviews in order to understand the following: the extent of the Urban Agenda, whether the NPS' new relevancy initiatives are different from previous ones, and perhaps most importantly, how these initiatives are playing out and being perceived by real people who enact them.

In the autumn of 2014, I completed eight in depth, expert interviews that lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The subjects are current or previous NPS employees, employees of partner organizations to specific national parks, advisees to the NPS, or some combination thereof. Two interviews took place in the subjects' professional offices, the remainder were completed over the phone. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interviewees were selected based on their high level of involvement with current NPS affairs through convenience and snowball sampling methods. More specifically, I considered (often overlapping) situations such as: direct involvement in either the Urban Agenda or *A Call to Action* either in creation or implementation, staff membership of one of the park case studies in question, staff membership of a private partner organization that works closely with the park, or overarching NPS on diversity and inclusion. The interviews were semi-structured and

consisted of an interview guide with essentially the same questions, albeit slightly adjusted depending on the subject's expert perspective (mostly split between those working directly for the NPS and those not). The goal of collecting this sort of data was to create a more thorough, connected picture of what is happening in the NPS today, and to try to understand the various perspectives and attitudes towards the changes.

I also used primary document analysis in my study. The documents were mostly government reports, budgets, and legislation related to diversity in the NPS and NPS effects on place (whether a specific place like a certain site, or place generally as in all NPS sites across the landscape). I read them for information and diction, particularly how documents referred (or did not refer) to people of color and stances on historical interpretation/representation.

In order to better answer the research questions, I decided to use a comparison model case study to ground all of the findings in a real example. I used two NPS sites in Minnesota: the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) and Voyageurs National Park. MNRRA is a truly urban NPS unit; it is composed of 72 miles of the Mississippi River and its banks that run directly through the Twin Cities metro area (home to approximately 3.8 million people). Voyageurs is closer to the 'traditional' national park model in the sense that it is *not* urban; it is rural and fairly isolated (on the Canadian border, a 2-3 hour drive from any population concentration larger than 10,000 people). There are six NPS units in Minnesota, but I chose MNRRA and Voyageurs because I wanted to compare an urban park with a 'traditional' park, and the other units which include a national trail, smaller historical monuments etc., were slightly less 'traditional' in that sense than Voyageurs. I gathered my data about these places and the

stories attached to them surrounding racial and ethnic inclusion in the same way I gathered data and information for the other sections of my thesis: interviews, primary documents, and library research (also, in the case of MNRRA, site visits).

Limitations

An important limitation of this project as a whole is the lens through which I decided to look at the challenge of racial/ethnic inclusion in the NPS through urban parks. I am well aware of the fact that I write about a social justice issue involving people of color and that in the study I do not purposefully collect data directly from the populations I am writing about. There are several reasons for this. First, the most relevant and appropriate way to represent communities of color in my research would be to conduct some sort of visitor survey in MNRRA and/or Voyageurs National Park and survey the surrounding communities to see why the respective park is or is not visited. I determined that this sort of project was out of scope for the given timeframe, and while not from either MNRRA or Voyageurs there are already many of these park visitor surveys that I was uninterested in replicating. Second, given the scope of my research, approaching the problem from the communities' of color lens felt dangerously close to generalizing the opinions and habits of a group from the responses of a few. This relates to larger qualms about leisure geography research mentioned in the literature review. Third, because my research focuses on NPS efforts towards inclusion, I decided it would be most appropriate to focus on the NPS as an organization and not as intently on the populations whom the efforts target - this other focus would be appropriate for future research, however, especially in a few years after the actions and results of this latest 'round' of initiatives are further developed.

There are other limitations of my research, as well. I bring personal preconceptions and biases to my work, no matter how consciously I try to eliminate them for research purposes. The interviews were semi-structured, so naturally they differed in ways that potentially skewed or excluded information. Another limitation is that interview subjects expressed personal opinion but mostly did not take off their professional ‘hats’, which could have masked true opinions and perceptions. Conversely, while I chose interview subjects based on their relevant professional expertise, their opinions and attitudes are uniquely theirs and not necessarily representative of all opinions and attitudes in the NPS and its partners that influence these issues of inclusion and relevancy.

Analysis

Introduction

I have contextualized the NPS in the ever-evolving nature/wilderness vs. society debate and how it involves race and ethnicity. Now, I am ready to lay out what the NPS looks like today in regards to race/ethnicity, what actions are being taken in response to that picture, and what those actions might mean for the future in relation to what the NPS refers to as ‘relevancy’, or remaining relevant to the future United States population who will be majority people of color. In this analysis section I will use all of my collected resources to explore the following questions: What is the NPS doing now to include of people of color, and what are they doing differently than what they have done in the past? How do NPS goals of inclusion connect to its recent emphasis on urban parks and populations? As the NPS goes into its second century, what does it envision as progress, and are there indications based on its actions that this progress will actually be achieved?

To explore some of these questions further I use two national parks in Minnesota, Mississippi National River and Recreation Area and Voyageurs National Park, as a case study. These two parks are quite different but share a region and therefore, to a certain extent, a culture (despite the urban and rural differences). This allows me to compare these two places and think about how changes in the NPS could look on the ground in these two parks specifically, and how this could apply to other parks and places like them around the country.

Exclusion in the Modern NPS

In the national and local data that are available, it is evident that white people generally visit national parks more than people of color. While in 2013 non-Hispanic/Latino whites made up 62.6% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census), national park visitation data regularly report a large majority of visitors are white (90% is not unusual) (Floyd, 1999; Stanfield McCown, 2011). In contrast, the Black population of the U.S. is 13.2%, the Hispanic/Latino 17.1%, Asian 5.3%, and American Indian 1.2%, but in a 2013 study sampling dozens of parks across the country, the average rate of African American visitation is 2%, American Indian 2%, Asian 3.4%, Latino 3.7% (Yen Le, 2013). The population in Tucson, AZ, for example, is 41% Hispanic/Latino, yet at Saguaro National Park located a 30 minute drive outside the city, Latinos make up about 3% of park visitation (Yen Le, 2013). At Santa Monica Mountain National Recreation Area, which is adjacent to the Los Angeles metro-area (54.6% white according to the 2009 ACS), visitors are 72% White, 11.8 % Latino, 5.5% Asian, 1.8% African American, and .5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The examples of this pattern could go on and on to varying to degrees in virtually every park in the NPS.

The NPS is not unaware of this disparity. In 2009 it completed a study titled *Racial and Ethnic Diversity of National Park System Visitors and Non-Visitors* through extensive phone surveys (n=4103). It found that U.S. residents who could name a NPS park they had visited in the previous two years “were disproportionately white and non-Hispanic” and that “visitation differences by race/ethnic group seem not to have changed much since the previous [survey] iteration [...] in 2000” (NPS, 2009) despite the fact that non-Hispanic white population growth was the slowest between 2000 and 2010 relative to other races/ethnicities (US Census, 2011).

While not extensively documented, there are some theories as to why people of color are excluded from parkland, specifically in NPS landscapes. There are four theoretical hypotheses about why people of color are underrepresented as NPS visitors (Floyd 1999, Le 2013), and they are quite similar to reasons overviewed in the urban parks section of the literature review. The first is the marginality/elitism hypothesis, which states that people of color do have an interest in recreation activities like visiting national parks but are limited by socioeconomic constraints (time, income, transportation) and lack of awareness of the national parks. Next is the subculture/ethnicity hypothesis, which claims that different ethnic groups have different values and interests regarding recreation and nature that result in different activities. For example, various studies have shown that European Americans tend to emphasize individual accomplishment more heavily during recreation while Asian Americans, African Americans, and Latinos lean towards personal or familial relationships in recreation (Oh and Ditton, 2009 as cited in Weber and Sultana, 2014). These recreational “values”, then, influence what kind of recreation people participate in (solo backpacking trips or family picnics, for example),

and national parks' recreational offerings may be favorably skewed toward one or a few racial groups' preferences.

The third hypothesis is the cultural assimilation hypothesis. This hypothesis is more focused on various immigrant groups rather than the African American population, and states that "as minority groups take on the characteristics of the majority group, they will come to share its values" of frequenting outdoor recreation opportunities such as national parks (Weber and Sultana, 2014, p. 445). This hypothesis is widely criticized for Eurocentrism and overlooking different cultural views on the natural world and recreation. Discrimination hypothesis is the final hypothesis about why people of color are underrepresented in national parks. It addresses the legacy of racial/ethnic discrimination, past and present, and that "the ideal of wilderness was 'white' [...] and the NPS itself might contribute to, or have been, a part of the problem from the beginning of the national park idea" (Phillip, 2000 as cited in Weber and Sultana, 2014, p. 445). In other words, the idea of nature and wilderness at the very least in the context of recreation, was created by a Eurocentric society and therefore is inherently, directly and indirectly, a place of discrimination for people of color. Logically then, especially if the place is for voluntary recreation, those discriminated against choose not to go.

The two hypotheses with the strongest evidence, especially in combination, are the discrimination hypothesis and the marginality/elitism hypothesis. The evidence of the discrimination hypothesis is clear considering how "projects of nature making have historically been projects of appropriation and exclusion" (Byrne, 2012, p.10). For example, essentially all of the early western park creation involved American Indian displacement that was traumatic and contentious enough that legal battles between certain

tribes and the NPS continue to this day (Taylor and Geffen, 2003). Racial discrimination in southern national parks was commonplace under Jim Crow, despite that the NPS had been officially desegregated in the 1930s. This was largely because many national parks were previously state parks where segregation had been enforced. State parks, which were the foundation of many southern national parks such as Shenandoah National Park and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, were created in the early/mid-20th century to “preserve scenic landscapes, ideally distributed to ensure near-to-home access for residents in all sections of each state” (O’Brien, 2012, p.169). In the South there were a total of nine ‘Negro recreational facilities’ created during the New Deal as a part of the Recreational Demonstration Program, and the rest of the parks were segregated or Whites-only (largely from a not-in-my-backyard response from many nearby white residents). To give a better picture of how strongly unwelcome people of color (primarily African Americans) were in Southern state parks, there are accounts of several recreational facilities and areas, primarily shorelines, that governments closed in the 1950s rather than integrate (Ibid).

Today, this legacy of discrimination lingers in park actions and visitors’ of color experiences. One impactful method of discrimination is the exclusion or erasure of the stories that involve people of color in a particular park’s history. Until recently the story of Yosemite’s Buffalo Soldiers, a group of African American cavalry who assisted in running the park and surrounding mountains, went untold although it is a vital part of the park’s history. Similarly, the stories of African American cave guides at Mammoth Cave in Kentucky who were decommissioned at the park’s official establishment go untold. Additionally, there are Southern parks involving slave heritage that often downplay the

role of slavery and fail to mention the entire truth of the brutal working conditions in the site's historical interpretation (Weber and Sultana, 2013; Finney, 2014).

Racism in parks is not limited to the South, of course. At the Statue of Liberty, NPS staff failed to clearly and openly interpret the story of the chains on the statue that symbolize the slave liberation, while other similar details of the statue not relating to slavery were explained (DeGrue, 2015). Byrne's 2012 study of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area recounted Hispanic subjects' perspectives of racism at the park. One woman thought she needed a special pass to enter (and thus she would not be let in), and a man did not visit because he thought that in some parts of the park white residents nearby would call the sheriff because he "regarded the national park as a wealthy, white space". In general, participants in the study "expressed concern about being identified as different or feeling like outsiders" and felt that the park was "'American' or 'whites-only'". Another study about Latino populations in Tucson reflecting on perceptions of Saguaro NP catalogued "sensations of being watched" at the park and unfriendly park personnel encounters. Additionally, study participants who did not speak fluent English talked about how information about the park in Spanish was offered inadequately to meet their needs (Yen Le, 2013). It is difficult to discuss discrimination in national parks without discussing discrimination in American society in general, but these examples point to how it can play out in these specific places. The connection between racism, the overhanging threat of racial violence, and low visitation rates of people of color in national parks is prevalent due to parks' rural, white tendencies - "our [African American] environmental organization constituents are afraid of two things: the unknown (wildlife) and white people" (Finney, 2014, p. 106).

All of these past and present discriminatory practices can explain much of why national parks do not include people of color proportionally. Collective memory, or “memories [...] socially constructed by groups who remember or recreate events from the past” (Coser, 1992 as cited in Finney, 2014, p. 53) in combination with individual experience create “cognitive maps [...] contributing to an individual’s behavior and potentially affecting subsequent generations and ethnic identity formations” (Johnson and Bowker, 2004 as cited in Finney, 2014, p. 56). Because parks are predominantly white spaces (whether initially by design and enforcement or by the later effects of being so or being linked with such places) and people of color generally have negative collective memories of interactions with white people, it is understandable that national parks could be zoned as off limits on people of color’s cognitive maps. Even if there are no conscious misgivings about going to national parks, the fact that the vast majority of NPS staff are white (80%) (NPS, 2009), and that the 20% who are people of color are not evenly distributed throughout NPS units can lead to further discomfort in an already unfamiliar situation and make visitors of color feel unwelcome and unlikely to return (Stanfield McCown, 2015).

The marginality/elitism hypothesis has been upheld fairly well in previous research along with the discrimination hypothesis. Marginality/elitism makes intrinsic sense when the racial socioeconomic statuses and resources demanded for visiting a national park are considered together. In 2013 the U.S. Census published the poverty rate for each race/ethnicity as follows: Whites and Asian 11.6%, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 17.6%, Hispanic 23.2%, African American 25.8%, and American Indian/Alaska Native 27% (US Census). It is important to note that the poverty rate for various ethnic

subgroups within these categories varies greatly, especially when noting which ethnic groups live where in relation to parks. Marginality/elitism also tends to prove itself in particularly geographic ways, connecting societal forces to their effects on space. Weber and Sultana found that the dispersion of national parks across the country and the dispersion of race was a significant factor in the underrepresentation in visitors of color in national parks. In general, awareness of recreation opportunities was higher for western U.S. residents than eastern U.S. residents (Johnson et al., 2007) and in the same spatial vein a different study proved that wilderness areas closer to cities were visited by more racially diverse visitors than the more rural areas, although a variety of factors influence the effects of distance (Ewert, 1998). Additionally, populations of color live statistically farther away from and will travel farther to get to national parks than whites live or travel (Carter, 2008). Weber and Sultana conducted a study on geographic accessibility (defined by physical proximity) to national parks and found a positive correlation between people of color's accessibility and visitation rates. Whites, however, had the most accessibility, followed by African Americans with 19% of the accessibility of whites (and the lowest percentage of participation besides Native Hawaiian) (2013). One often cited barrier to national parks is transportation. A car is essentially required to visit a vast majority of national parks due to their remote location combined with lack of available public transportation. This fact, combined with the skewed dispersion of poverty across race and the lower likelihood of car ownership when in poverty, can reasonably explain some of the lack of visitation to national parks.

Knowledge barriers also contribute to the marginality/elitism park hypothesis. In the 2009 NPS study about race/ethnicity and visitation, the most common reason for not

visiting a national park is that the survey taker “just doesn’t know that much about National Park System units”, and this answer was more common among Hispanic, Asian, and African American participants. Other studies reported few opportunities to learn more about parks, especially when there is a language barrier (Byrne, 2012; Sultana and Weber, 2013). Various parks with themes that are especially culturally significant to certain racial/ethnic groups find higher percentages of visitors of that race; for example, the highest percentage of Asian visitors is at Manzanar, the Japanese internment camp historic site, and parks with a Civil Rights theme see more African American visitors (Weber and Sultana, 2013). While also part of the subculture/ethnicity hypothesis, another problem is some proof that park design, or perceptions of low or no park design and facilities, influence low visitation rates by people of color. For example, in a study of Latino populations in Tucson a lack of large group picnic facilities was perceived as unwelcoming because that is how Latino study participants preferred to recreate (Le et. al., 2013).

Clearly, various forms of bias and discrimination exist in the NPS, and exist in complicated and overlapping ways that prevent people of color from enjoying their parks. These leisure studies hypotheses, however, are not only important in understanding why people of color are excluded. They are also important as frameworks from which the NPS is trying to address this disparity, which matters because each hypotheses needs to be addressed in order to promote inclusivity. With this in mind, how is the NPS, the government agency in charge of preserving natural and cultural landscapes for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this generation and future ones, going to include people of color?

What is the NPS Doing to Include People of Color?

Now that it has been established that the visitor base of national parks is largely white due to a variety of factors including overt and covert discrimination and park accessibility, the next logical question is what the NPS is doing to change that. In this section I outline NPS activity within the past five to eight years that has attempted to mitigate racial/ethnic disparities in visitation, thus become more inclusive. Why the past five to eight years? I chose this timeframe partially due to the dates of the primary documents that engage these issues, which seem to begin in 2007/2008 and sharply increase around 2010/2011. Additionally, when I asked expert interviewees, some of whom were integral in the writing of these documents and the ongoing NPS cultural shift, when they started to notice an increased emphasis on urban presence in the NPS (which is related to inclusivity initiatives, as I will explain later) in the NPS their answers ranged from “10 years” to “the past eight years” to “the last few years” to “the previous two years” (pers. comm., 2014). While the story of the NPS’ attempts to become inclusive is difficult to pinpoint chronologically, the three main, interconnected elements are the 2011 publication of *A Call to Action*, the Urban Agenda (which is the series of reports, discussions, programs, and goals surrounding NPS urban presence), and the upcoming NPS Centennial Celebration in 2016.

The NPS published *A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement* on August 25th, 2011. It is a 23 page, strategic, and action-oriented document that is “a call to all National Park Service employees and partners to commit to actions that advance the Service towards a shared vision for 2016 and our second century” (NPS, 2011). In the first few pages it outlines the brief history of the

founding of the NPS and the legacy of its first century. Then it reveals the second century vision, where the pledge to “recommit to the exemplary stewardship and public enjoyment of these places” is channeled into four themes:

- **Connect People to Parks:** helping communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild community economic and environmental sustainability.
- **Advances the Education Mission:** strengthening the NPS role as an educational force based on core American values, historical and scientific scholarship, and unbiased translation of the complexities of the American experience.
- **Preserves America’s Special Places:** being a leader in extending the benefits of conservation across physical, social, political, and international boundaries in partnership with others.
- **Enhances Professional and Organizational Excellence:** adapting to the changing needs of visitors, communities, and partners; encouraging organizational innovation; and giving employees the chance to reach their full potential. (NPS, 2011).

A Call to Action then lists three to four goals under each theme, and then lists actions under each theme - a total of 36 actions are distributed among the themes. The actions are big endeavors individually, but each share concrete, measurable goals. Many of these actions are related to the NPS in urban areas and inclusion of people of color. Examples include: Stop Talking and Listen involves parks conducting “in-depth, ongoing conversations” and creating work plans in order to learn about connecting diverse communities “to the outdoors and our collective history”. Value Diversity aims to

“develop a workforce that values diversity and an inclusive work environment” and will do so through a service-wide assessment and cultural competency training for all supervisors. In My Backyard has a goal of all urban NPS units having well known physical connections to non-automobile transportation (public transit or bike/pedestrian paths). These actions and many others in *A Call to Action* directly address the marginality/elitism and discrimination hypotheses of exclusion. The document ends with a last push for action, and tells readers (the audience is NPS employees and partners) to select the actions that will best make a difference in a particular park or program.

A Call to Action was not created in isolation - the document itself lists the following past initiatives as majorly influential in its making: *The Future of America's National Parks* (the Centennial Report, 2007), the National Parks Second Century Commission Report called *Advancing the National Park Idea* (2009), and *America's Great Outdoors: A Promise to Future Generations* (2011). The efforts of many NPS staff, partners at the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), National Park Foundation, community partners, congresspeople and senators, public intellectuals, and others went into creating these initiatives, and ultimately, *A Call to Action* over a period of years. A particularly important dissertation titled *Evaluation of National Park Service 21st Century Relevancy Initiatives: Case Studies Addressing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the National Park Service* was completed in 2011 by Rebecca Stanfield McCown at the University of Vermont School of Environment and Natural Resources in partnership with the NPS' Conservation Study Institute. Out of that dissertation came the NPS' *Beyond Outreach Handbook*, a how-to guide for parks to engage with communities of color through programming. Stanfield McCown's doctoral ideas on “deep engagement”,

which she defines as a holistic model to directly engage not only participants in a park or program but also indirectly engage other family or community members in order to create a lasting relationship, are central to how *A Call to Action* outlines including communities of color. Below (Figure 1) is her original Diversity/Relevancy Model that shows what elements the NPS needs to employ to include people of color:



Figure 1: Diversity/Relevancy Model (Stanfield McCown, 2011, p.17)

Stanfield McCown argues that these strategies are necessary to then successfully employ the six strategies of deep engagement: Skilled Staff, Supportive Leadership Environment, Working with Schools and Community Groups, Community Service and Giving Back, Recruitment of Park Stewards, and Knowledge of Local Culture (Stanfield McCown, 2011).

The importance of *A Call to Action* is hard to overstate in the NPS' efforts to become more inclusive of people of color and remain relevant to the U.S. population into the next century. The document uses dynamic, profound language throughout, such as in the second century vision: "*we will* fully represent our nation's ethnically and culturally diverse communities [...] *we will* create and deliver activities, programs, and services that honor, examine, and interpret America's complex heritage". Later on, in large font and clearly visible to someone even just flipping through the report, it asks:

employees and partners to commit to concrete actions that advance the mission of the Service, [...which in the second century] will be relevant and valued by citizens as a source of discovery, economic vitality, renewed spirit, and deepened understanding of our individual and national identity (NPS, 2011).

One reason behind this language is the NPS' strong desire and need for actual change, not just lip service to it, after years of stagnant visitor race/ethnicity statistics. Demographic data from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Censuses present consequential facts and timelines demonstrating racial/ethnic demographic transition from a nation with a white majority to a nation with a people of color majority. Rebecca Stanfield-McCown, who is now the Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator at the NPS' Conservation Study Institute, said there has been a wakeup call in the NPS. While talking about the Urban Agenda, which is implicitly tied to the Call to Action in its effort to connect people to parks, she mentioned that there was a meeting in 1985 about NPS presence and the role

in urban areas that produced a report. She said that in 2012, when a very similar meeting was held the report produced as usual was, to the surprise and disappointment of the people of the meeting, nearly identical to the one produced in 1985. The wakeup call was “do you really want to be having this conversation in 25 years? [...] it was an opportunity to say we’re going to try things differently [...] we’re really going to push action on this one” (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm., 2015). This sentiment has been echoed at the top of the NPS hierarchy as well. NPS Director Jon Jarvis, appointed in 2009 and responsible for the roll out of *A Call to Action*, similarly calls the upcoming Centennial “an alarm clock” for relevancy. He held a public webinar about diversity in the NPS in late 2014 where he spoke of how numbers and data alone about diversity are not working - there needs to be real action in response to the data (Jarvis, 2014).

If *A Call to Action* is the central document of the NPS’ goal to be racially inclusive, then the Urban Agenda is one of the steps, if not the central one, towards achieving that goal. The Urban Agenda is less tangible and definitive than *A Call to Action* - it is not a singular document or action, but a collection of actions and motivations compiled by various NPS staff and partners - a lens through which to approach inclusion and relevancy. The closest the NPS comes to spelling out an Urban Agenda is on its website for employees and administrators called “Urban Matters” that was started in 2012 by the NPS Conservation Study Institute. Under the Urban Agenda tab, there is a list of the working components of the Urban Agenda as follows: urban innovations, urban policy, branding urban NPS, urban parks as portals to diversity, introducing youth to nature, and the NPS’ role in economic revitalization of urban areas. Each component is meant to “set out a bold vision for the National Park Service in urban

environments” (NPS). Stanfield McCown calls the Urban Agenda a tool “to begin to rethink how the NPS works in communities, how we can work more holistically and strategically across parks and programs with community groups so we’re aligning all of our resources with the values and goals of the community” (pers. comm., December 1st 2014). Six of the thirty six actions in *A Call to Action* are explicitly urban focused, and one of the subthemes of the Connecting People to Parks theme is to connect urban communities to parks, trails, etc. thereby making all 14 actions implicitly urban. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell hosted a major webinar about the importance of urban parks as a part of the “Urban Matters Engagement Series” in July of 2013 (NPS, 2013). Clearly, urban is resurfacing in the NPS.

The NPS Advisory Board, a group of twelve independent advisors to the NPS director and Secretary of the Interior that has existed since 1935, was divided into subcommittees to address ten tasks laid out by Director Jarvis after his appointment. One of those tasks was “Plan for a Future National Park System”, and under the challenge of that task an urban subcommittee formed and produced a report in 2012. The report’s general conclusions include the need for the NPS to engage with urban populations to establish “positive lifelong connection” between residents and parks, trails, and otherwise natural and cultural heritages and that the NPS “should take a leadership role to help address the increasing instance of environmental injustice and barriers between communities and parks and open space [...] [in a way] that does not feel like a ‘top down’ process” (United States, National Park Service, 2012). It goes on to further highlight best practices such as the NPS providing support for community based initiatives rather than coming up with the initiatives on its own, and fostering reciprocal relationships with

communities, and others in line with deep engagement practices. An interesting highlight directly related to the inclusion of people of color is the recommendation to revise criteria for historic sites. Criteria currently focuses strongly on architecture, “overlooking sites that represent stories of recent immigrants and the working population; a factor that was identified [...] as a primary reason for the extremely low numbers of Latino National Heritage Landmarks [sites reflecting Latino culture]”. The report concludes with the proposal to create a permanent Urban Panel that would address the following elements in urban places: needs and interests of communities, access to a park/NPS office, capacity of parks for meaningful engagement, external programs, transportation, programming, long term engagement, and park history/organizational culture applied to all elements listed above (United States. National Park Service, 2012).

These individual yet interconnected urban plans have been backed up by the 2015 President’s budget for the NPS. The NPS was granted an additional \$55.1 million in 2015 making the total \$2.6 billion; of this budget, the amount of permanent funding increased by almost two and a half times (244%). The budget is largely driven by the coming Centennial, and there is \$25 million set aside for the Urban Parks and Recreation fund which previously had been defunded. Other programs that are not explicitly urban in title but are at least partly urban focused, such as the Centennial Challenge and the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance programs, are receiving well over \$100 million that is guaranteed to be renewed over the next several years (DOI, 2014).

The presence of urban is not new to the NPS (i.e. 1930s and 1940s Recreational Demonstration Area, 1960s urban renewal, the 1980s emergence of Environmental Justice). Previously to the most recent Urban Agenda, there were isolated efforts, large

and small, to involve urban communities in their public lands, both close to and far from home. A few isolated examples include Urban Resource Partnerships, which provided NPS/USFS/other government funds for urban environmental cleanup projects in the 1990s (it was shut down along with the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery program in the 2002 because of funding cuts) (USDA, 1999) and the 1985 NPS meeting about the agency's presence in urban areas (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm., 2014). However, today the realization of the importance of urban populations in conservation and stewardship seems to be sweeping the conservation/environmental organization world more holistically. Carolyn Finney, a scholar of the relationship between African Americans and the environment and advisor to the NPS and other organizations, says "everyone [environmental organizations] is having some sort of urban thing going on right now [...] keep in mind, the environmental justice movement has been looking mostly at cities since the 1980s, and has been doing their own work around this" (pers. comm., Jan. 8th 2015). Stanfield McCown says for the NPS, it began to gain momentum right around the publication time of *A Call to Action* when 2010 Census data showed that over 80% of the U.S. population was urban. Not to mention that "a good portion of the NPS work in urban areas, that a good portion of our visits are in urban areas, like the National Mall" (pers. comm., December 1st 2014). Several interviewees working for or in partnership with the NPS observed what they perceived to be a distinct urban presence/influence in the messaging they had received about the Centennial. NPS partners such as the NPCA show the extent of NPS efforts to reach out to create the best plan possible: "we have had a lot of involvement with the Urban Agenda that's coming out [...] from a project standpoint [we provide] support to execute the things they [the

NPS] want to do connected to the Urban Agenda” (Varner, pers. comm., November 18, 2014). According to Carolyn Finney (pers. comm., January 8, 2015), the Urban Agenda’s promotion of engagement with nature in urban areas is a step in the right direction towards the inclusion of people of color:

They’re looking at urban areas, and urban is also code for diversity, which is important to say [...] I’m glad it’s [sic NPS] focusing on urban areas because urban areas get ghettoized in the conversation surrounding the environment. Like there is no nature in the city, and it’s like hello, nature is everywhere!

If *A Call to Action* is the central document of the NPS’ goal to be racially inclusive and the Urban Agenda is the central push behind that goal, the NPS Centennial in 2016 is the momentum behind this push. The 2000 census, combined with park visitation research, were the catalysts for the NPS’ realization that its ability to stay true to its mission to serve America - all of it - and its future relevance to the citizenry were in jeopardy. While various reports were published about cultural heritage needs and other topics related to inclusion previously (Kaufman, 2004; Ridenour, NPS, 1990), internal planning for the Centennial Celebration began nine years prior to the actual event in 2007, when the Secretary of the Interior published the “National Parks Centennial Initiative”. This document laid out some budget targets and programmatic goals, some of which highlighted the importance of heritage in a section called “Connecting Parks to People” (reflected in *A Call to Action*). However, its example of American heritage leaves something to be desired, especially in the representation of people of color: “parks can tell the stories of how we grew as a Nation—like the stories told at sites commemorating early European settlements like Jamestown in Virginia or celebrating the journey of Lewis and Clark” (Department of the Interior, 2007). The other example of heritage is the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, which is difficult to visit due to its

dispersion and in contrast to the celebratory park examples above, a remembrance of a horrible event that happened to American Indians. Perhaps noting the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site would have been more comparable as a commemoration of a civil rights victory that grew the Nation and as something not exclusively involving the conquest of people. Early Centennial planning included each NPS unit filling out a standardized first annual Centennial Strategy document by the summer of 2007 for the purpose of identifying what that unit wanted to accomplish with the Centennial. Based on my brief survey of these online forms, they were filled out to varying degrees, with some barely filled out at all. The resulting report was *The Future of America's National Parks*, which as was mentioned earlier was a key document in forming *A Call to Action*, although on its own just another report to be on file. In short, it appears as if Centennial planning was compulsory and regularly slow (partially in relation to funding) NPS procedure.

That changed when current NPS director Jon Jarvis was appointed in 2009. That is not to say that what he has done with the Centennial was not made possible by previous directors, but that change in leadership shifted the tone surrounding the Centennial. Additionally, regardless of who the Director was energy would likely have picked up around the Centennial as it drew closer. Jarvis, however, has embraced the Centennial as an opportunity to make long-lasting changes to the NPS - in other words, not business as usual. The Centennial is special because it is not just an anniversary. Centennials generally carry great significance in that they measure a single time period in which much happens and that is impressive to even survive. Going into a new 100 years is going into uncharted territory; but unlike other more ordinary passages of time, it holds

greater promises of rebirth. I think this is certainly the case for the NPS, and those in the higher administration seem to agree. Jarvis stated that ‘relevancy’, resulting in all people caring about and seeing the value in national parks, is the most important issue facing the NPS and that he wants to bring it about as his legacy (2014).

The action plan for the Centennial is, of course, *A Call to Action*, and the NPS is counting on urban focus and engagement to bring about that change into the next century. The steps are in place to recreate the NPS to be inclusive of people of color as visitors, staff, and a part of the stories parks tell. There are big plans for the Centennial to get more people involved, visiting, and volunteering in parks than ever before (U.S. National Park Service, 2015). In order to go beyond documents and plans, however, I think there is much to take away from listening to what experts involved inside and outside of the NPS have to say about the changing park system. To do so, in the next section I will delve more deeply into interview findings.

Findings from Expert Interviews: Perspectives on Relevancy and Inclusivity

I identified several themes from the interviews I conducted with various experts on the NPS, relevancy, and inclusion of people of color. The themes vary in magnitude, but each are important to understanding how NPS relevancy and inclusivity plays out in the living, dynamic organization that is the NPS and in the workings of the people who ultimately enact these initiatives. The themes are: Challenges of New Audiences, What is the NPS Role, and Organizational Culture Shift.

Challenges of New Audiences. The most unanimous sentiment expressed among interviewees was the importance of new audiences for relevancy purposes. This was

somewhat of a relief - if these NPS players did not see this as important, they would not be doing their jobs. The reasons for the importance of new audiences and precisely who those audiences were, however, varied. The new audiences interviewees looked to engage included school children and the general youth population, families, geographically urban populations, people of color (also referred to as “diverse populations”, “those folks”, and “the changing demographic”), voters, and people who were not the typical national park visitor (white, middle class/wealthy, educated, heterosexual).

Mirroring this, the majority of interviewees express dissatisfaction with current park visitor demographics: “strangely, until a few years ago [...] the park nestled between Cleveland and Akron had the same demographic as say, Yellowstone [...] that’s what this relevancy [initiative] is trying to address” (Labovitz, pers. comm. January 16, 2015) and “if the NPS wants to remain relevant it has to build relationships with [...] a wider, more diverse group of people because that’s what the U.S. is” (Finney, pers. comm., January 8, 2015). Ranger Dressler expressed a different view on visitor demographics: “there is a lot of value judgment in it [demographics] that’s going to differ from park to park [...] we don’t know much about the demographics” (Ibid, pers. comm., 2014).

Reasons and methods for attracting new audiences differed as well. Most answers were something along the lines of how appealing to all Americans, which the NPS is currently not doing, is a part of the mission and the right thing to do. Labovitz stated relevancy economically: “from the business side, our customer base that was changing dramatically [...] and our visitor demographic was not changing. And that’s sort of a path to obscurity” (pers. comm., January 15, 2015). Finney expressed dissatisfaction with the framework of the ‘attracting new audiences’ idea all together:

The audiences aren't new [...] I don't use the term 'outreach' anymore because I think it's outdated. Outreach is a one directional relationship, meaning I can outreach to you, bring you to my way of thinking and what it is that I do [...] but it doesn't actually recognize that you might have knowledge, ideas, experience, that would change the way that I think. (pers. comm., January 8, 2015).

Numerous other challenges of attracting new audiences mentioned by interviewees supported the marginality/elitism hypothesis. They included: transportation, poor marketing, lack of materials/interpretation to include or appeal to diverse audiences, specific unit location, focusing on NPS needs as opposed to the public's needs, individual staff efforts to engage (no power/small impact) vs. entire NPS culture change (all the power/potentially large impact but more difficult), the public's misunderstanding of what NPS is (not just big, 'traditional' parks) and not knowing what to do at a park, creating relationships with people who are different than yourself, organizational inertia, the NPS workforce not reflecting U.S. public, and the NPS not being inclusive in what histories/stories are told. Clearly, the desire to expand the NPS audience does not translate over into an obvious path of how to do so. Not all, but many, of these challenges are exemplified in an anecdote told to me by Paul Labovitz, a NPS Superintendent. He says:

We're really rotten at marketing, we don't advertise what we do very well. But the people who know we're doing programs are those people who already know what we do and [they] love us. Because they all show up, we don't feel compelled to do a little more outreach to change that up. The joke I would always make is, we had these interpreters at all these parks I worked at and they knew the audience on a first name basis because the same people came to every program, because they love the national parks. It didn't matter what we were talking about, they loved it. It's easy as a ranger - it's great to be in front of a bunch of people who hang on every word you say, but if the population of the community you're in is changing and you're not talking to those folks, that is a bad strategy for sustaining yourself over the long run. (pers. comm., January 16, 2015)

What this story shows is how, to a certain extent, until the present the NPS has been complacent, or settling for reaching anyone as good enough outreach, simply because it

was easy. What is important to remember is that “ the NPS doesn’t exist outside of everything else that happens in this country, it exists right within it and it informs it and is informed by it” (Finney, pers. comm., 2015).

What Is the NPS’ Role, and to Whom? Another important kind of information to glean from these interviews is what NPS employees and partners perceive the NPS to be, both to the NPS itself (internally) and to the public (externally). These interviewee perspectives are important because their visions of the NPS are likely to become reality.

The interviewees had several impressions of what the park service is to the public. In some cases when the public is aware of a park and NPS programs, especially in more urban parks, the park is seen as a community resource. Finney talks about her experience advising Cuyahoga National Park on community partnering: “when the groups [included Boys and Girls Clubs, a big hospital, other diverse community groups] heard that the park wanted to build these relationships, they jumped on board, they were ready, let’s do this” (pers. comm. 2015). To most of the public enjoying the parks, however, the land is exactly that: simply a park, a place to recreate in and to enjoy. Labovitz puts it like this:

The public perceives the park land mostly as park. They don’t say national, state, or local - it’s a park. They don’t care. [...] Here, for example, we have Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and we surround Indiana Dunes State Park. The state park is run by the State’s DNR, and the public doesn’t care [...] people think it’s a park. (pers. comm., 2015)

This statement reveals the gap between how the public views the parks and how the NPS views the parks. It seems as if public’s view of parks is fairly stagnant, if present at all, and the NPS’ view of parks is changing to meet the public’s needs, and they want the public to see parks in a new way, too. Some things, though, do not change, and Ranger Tawnya Schoewe agrees: “we [NPS employees] are truly public servants, and we are here

to preserve this for people. We're not here to lock it up, we're not here to keep people away, we are here to show people what is here, and to help them experience it" (pers. comm. November 20, 2014). There is a shift in the NPS, however, towards integrating more into the public's lives beyond the current extent:

One of the things I do see evolving is viewing parks as more than just a place to go on vacation, but really looking at them as educational tools, as real or virtual classrooms, and places where people sort of carry out their daily lives. So that is going to get elevated in the coming years, that the role of NPS is beyond just visitation and tourism. (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014)

This is significant in that the shift is the reason for the urban push: more people live in urban areas and more people will "carry out their daily lives" in urban parks.

Another shift in the NPS' role, to itself and hopefully to the public, is the bolder emphasis on cultural heritage in the parks as opposed to solely nature/ecology (Varner, Tome, Stanfield McCown, Labovitz, pers. comm., 2014, 2015). While the NPS has nearly always focused on both cultural and natural heritage (as best as they can be separated), there is recognition of the NPS evolution from "majestic landscapes to ecological preserves to urban areas that are protecting culture and history" (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014) and that the scope of NPS offerings has shifted but their purpose has not. As the scope of services widens under the relevancy initiatives, the NPS also wants to streamline what they do: "as we move into the Centennial, the NPS is trying to bring together the parks and programs of the NPS to create a one united front of what the service has to offer" (Ibid, 2014). This is important because the NPS hopes that if the public better understands what their purpose is and what they do, it will be more likely to use what the NPS has to offer.

Organizational Culture Shift. The organizational culture shift that is unfolding at the NPS is perhaps the most important theme from the interviews. This is because it is the underlying necessity in achieving and attracting new audiences, changing the public perception of the NPS, and ultimately, creating inclusive landscapes. The organizational culture shift can be broken down into subthemes of partnerships/sharing responsibility, inclusivity, placemaking, and sustainable change.

In the relevancy initiatives there is a large emphasis on partnership and truly sharing responsibility for parks with non-NPS organizations. Part of partnering with outside organizations is purely practical - it is a way to do more with the same resources.

The benefit of reaching a new public and working with the organizations who truly understand what they value is critical. As we face tighter budgets [...] being able to manage areas in collaboration with other groups and pooling those resources together to better manage a place is important. [...] And it does ease some of the burdens of the park service when it comes to maintenance. (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm., December 1, 2014)

In his current park, Superintendent Labovitz expressed a similar sentiment about partnerships, but also touches on resistance from the old school of thought and why it does a disservice to everyone:

We share the management of the resource, and a lot of people internally don't like that because they like being in control of everything. Consequently, we don't do anything in places because we don't have a partnership, and then the place falls apart [...] it's better to give up a little power and have something good happen [...] Not to mention the private/nonprofit sector can be a lot more clever and smarter than we are. (pers. comm., January 16, 2015)

Partnerships are not only becoming a larger part of resource management and storytelling in individual parks, but they also have played a major role in helping the NPS to institute the organizational shift and relevancy initiatives themselves. Jamie Varner, who works at the NPCA on relevancy issues, says the NPCA “deal[s] with the NPS presence and

strategy in the context of urban environments [...] we supported that process quite a bit and we're involved from a project standpoint as their programs roll out [...] by providing support to execute the things they want to do" (pers. comm., November 18, 2014).

Partnerships and sharing responsibility for NPS sites, however, is more than just convenient. Sharing responsibility is a direct, powerful way for the NPS to be more inclusive of communities of color. Partnerships are a way for the NPS to manage "assets of a story, an environment, instead of going in and saying we need to own every single building in this area to tell you about a river, the park service will be working in partnership to tell that story with other groups" (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. December 1, 2015). In other words, partnerships are a way for the NPS to move away from a prescriptive, rigid model of storytelling towards a more flexible interpretation through community engagement that ultimately is more relevant to the community. If the NPS wants to tell stories that are relevant to the people of color they want engage, the logical way to do with is to partner with them.

According to some of the interviewees, though, this is not easy for the park service. It is no secret that historically the NPS is predominantly white and male, meaning that the culture of those in power and places of decision making is white and male. "There has to be a power shift [...] and] if that's all you've known," says Finney, "and now someone is asking you to change that up and you can't be holding all that power in the same way anymore, it's scary" (pers. comm. January 8, 2015). If there is a premise of fear behind a power shift and true engagement, no wonder it has not been seriously discussed until now, as the transition framed by the Census data is beginning to be at least acknowledged. "Partnerships always come with that scary piece of letting go a

little bit, a little bit of leadership and decision making”, but the reaped benefits are worth the risk (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014). For this reason, building long term relationships is key to successful partnerships (Finney, pers. comm. 2014).

This perspective on partnerships leads to another part of the NPS organizational shift: diversity and inclusivity. Creating inclusive landscapes for people of color and engaging the entirety of our society is why these relevancy initiatives exist, but to succeed the NPS needs to do some “internal work” (Finney, pers. comm. 2014). That is not to say progress is not being made - Finney, who is African American and as previously mentioned a member of the NPS Advisory Board, says:

To ask someone like me to be involved [on the NPS Advisory Board], it’s not enough but it’s a start to create the space for the [race] conversation to be had, that’s important. A few years ago I’m not sure there was that space. There are people in the NPS who see the value and importance of it, even if they don’t understand how to do it, and they’re using their power and position to try to create those opportunities. (pers. comm. 2014)

An important way to promote diversity and inclusivity in the NPS is to hire people of color and make sure they are recognized and well represented in leadership. “Having a predominantly white workforce makes it really hard for a person of color to come into a new environment where they may be uncomfortable and feel like they’re welcome there when they don’t see anyone who looks like them” (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014). There are programs in place to work on this, such as the NPS Academy (which introduces students in higher education from underrepresented communities to NPS career opportunities each year) and others related to *A Call to Action*, including all programs aimed towards youth, some of whom the NPS hopes will become future employees based on their early sparked interest (Labovitz, Finney, Stanfield McCown, pers. comm., 2014, 2015).

Another part of the organizational shift to become more inclusive and relevant is a renewed focus on placemaking and integrating parks into people's daily lives. The Urban Agenda is a part of this in that it attempts to elevate nontraditional parks (traditional parks being the famous 'crown jewels' like Yosemite and Yellowstone) that see more visitors than traditional parks do. Urban parks are places to engage and "start the conversation there about what the role of the NPS should be in these people's lives that might not know that we exist but might be walking through a national park on their way to work, drinking their coffee anyway" (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014). In responding to a question about whether the point of engagement is to get everyone to the 'crown jewels', Finney nicely describes the importance of placemaking in the NPS' shift:

I don't think that is the primary point. Getting people to care about where they are and the values - what is it that the Grand Canyon offers that can be revealed in a place where [lots of] people live? [There are] incredible stories we have all over the country [and] any community can tap into that and therefore can then make the leap to thinking about what I call the 'foundational' understandings about the importance of place. (pers. comm. 2014)

There also is a slight recognition and emphasis on the economic value parks bring nationally and locally that shows in urban parks. Although the NPS undervalues itself as "national tourism product" and the economic power that it brings (Labovitz, pers. comm. 2015), several interviewees saw the enormous value parks bring to gateway communities (Schoewe, Dressler, Stanfield McCown, Labovitz, all pers. comm.). Indeed much of the Urban Agenda is about partnering with communities for economic revitalization.

An additional, more national framework for placemaking included in the organizational shift is the creation of a network of parks. This promotes the idea that all of the parks are connected, physically and conceptually, despite their vast cultural and geographic differences. This is not a new idea – it was used historically to promote the

NPS, and plenty of trail networks and greenway connections exist today (Labovitz, pers. comm. 2015), as do informal networks between park staffs in order to programmatically share resources. NPS administration think that expanding the presence of and creating more thematic parks, such as the Civil War/Civil Rights parks' connections, can be helpful in promoting inclusivity because they are an opportunity to tell more stories and get more people to relate to the park service: "that's something the park service is working on emphasizing, that it's a system of parks, not just 401 random units, but a system that's working together to tell a cohesive story of the country" (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm., 2014; Finney pers. comm. 2015).

The last element of the NPS organizational culture shift was that sustainable change takes time. Director Jarvis said that this change is "a cultural shift that will not happen overnight" (2014). This time the NPS seems to recognize that for the outcome to be different, the process has to be different: "our goal this time is not so much focusing on writing a report, but focusing on how to bring people together in a sustainable way to have conversations and to make change" (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014). Inclusion and the relationship building needed to do it take time; as Finney (pers. comm., 2015) aptly states, "to really shift how you think about diversity, difference [...] you don't just wake up one morning and know how to do it. [...] that means training, skill building, and a shift in consciousness, being honest about where you are." What is important to keep in mind with this organizational shift from NPS-centered to community-centered is that the process has no completion. Not in a dire, fatalistic sense, but in the sense that progress is ongoing - it is about the journey, not the destination. The challenge is getting everyone at the NPS, especially park superintendents (who are the right mix of locally

and nationally connected), on board so change can be “integrated into everything. [...] you can’t attach it like it’s a new program, it can’t be an extra thing for people to do” (Finney, pers. comm. 2014). Regarding the efforts that have already been made over the previous years, Labovitz optimistically states “luckily we’re so slow in government to change and we’ve been at it long enough that we’re going to start seeing some of the results” (pers. comm. 2015).

Discussion: What Stands Out in the Recent Relevancy Initiatives?

The interview and primary document analysis results are helpful in evaluating the NPS’ relevancy initiatives on their potential to successfully create more inclusive landscapes for people of color. The elements in these initiatives that stand out as indicators for potential success are: the realization of no progress, the presence of an action plan, and the timing of the Centennial.

Throughout the NPS there is a realization of no progress on inclusivity towards people of color because racial/ethnic visitor statistics have remained stagnant nationally for the past couple of decades. While some interviewees expressed doubt that everyone in the NPS was open to actually making deep, permanent changes in how they operate, no one argued that there needs to be change. Several interviewees expressed concern about history repeating itself and needing the old ways to be replaced. Another reason these initiatives are different today is that, arguably, there is more awareness in society today about race/ethnicity and racial injustice. After all, the NPS is an interwoven component of U.S. society, and the tides that are alerting the NPS to racial/ethnic exclusion are washing over everything else, too. Recent movements to disrupt the dominant cultural narrative such as Black Lives Matter and Occupy reverberate in ways that can trigger

progress. The uplift of national parks in urban areas is a change resulting from the realization of no progress. Urban parks “really were ostracized until maybe 10 years ago or less. People woke up and realized these places are getting millions of people to them, and they are the first experience for many people of the NPS.” The reason urban parks are hope for real change is that unlike many employees of ‘traditional’ parks, “the folks that gravitate towards the urban parks are change oriented and not status quo oriented” (Labovitz, pers. comm. 2015).

Another reason these initiatives stand out is the presence of a strong action plan. As mentioned earlier, *A Call to Action* has strong, determined language, and is explicit in its mandate to include audiences of color. It is precise and extremely clear on what needs to be accomplished and how. Its actions, along with many of the words I heard from the interviews, are centered in the ideas of engagement and listening - that the NPS needs to give audiences what they need and ask for, rather than give them what the NPS thinks they need and tells them. Better still, the NPS is actively measuring success through websites and other publications tying specific actions and programs to sections of *A Call to Action*.

Lastly, the Centennial makes the relevancy initiatives stand out and hold promise of success. The momentum behind it is enormous: “We have a momentum, a drive, for the first time in 40 years” says Director Jarvis (2014), and it is “really an opportunity [...] to try this differently” (Stanfield McCown, pers. comm. 2014). In addition to this momentum, there is a lot of attention on the NPS surrounding the Centennial, both financial and in the media. As mentioned earlier, the NPS budget has increased dramatically around the Centennial years, which has allowed and will allow for more

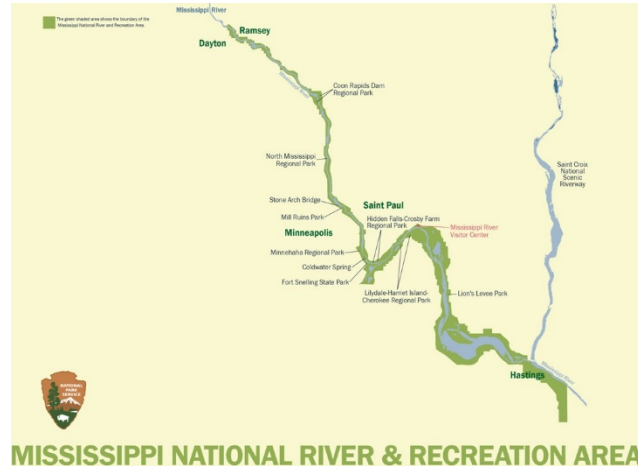
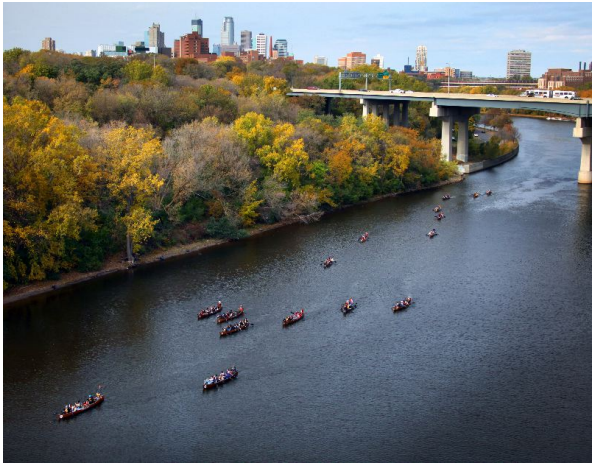
programming and marketing that can provide more opportunity for inclusion. If the budget is distributed across parks geographically and thematically diverse (which remains to be seen) there is potential for great impact.

Case Studies: MNRRA and Voyageurs National Park

In order to further understand how this momentum for change could play out and the NPS' urban direction, I conducted a comparative case study analysis of two local (Minnesotan) NPS units: Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) and Voyageurs National Park. While different in several ways, the critical difference I focus on for this comparison is the urbanness of MNRRA and ruralness, or more 'traditional' status, of Voyageurs. This lens is productive in examining whether or not the NPS' shift towards an urban focus will be helpful in the inclusion of people of color. I particularly want to consider how an urban park and a rural park enact, or plan to enact, the goals and actions set out by *A Call to Action* and the Centennial. I will begin by contextualizing each park, then look into what each park is doing and planning on doing to promote deep engagement in accordance with *A Call to Action* and the Centennial, explore placemaking at each park, and lastly explore challenges and how these two parks as a microcosm exemplify the organizational shift happening in the NPS.

MNRRRA and Voyageurs: Two Minnesotan Parks. MNRRRA (Figure 2) is

perhaps the most urban of the national parks in urban areas - it is a 72 mile stretch of the



Mississippi River (which consists of the water and varying amounts of riverbank) that runs directly through 30 communities, including both downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis (Figure 3).

Figure 2 (Wilderness Inquiry)

Figure 3 (Mississippi River Fund)

It includes several notable cultural/historic sites, namely St. Anthony Falls and Fort Snelling. Depending on which part of the river, popular visitor activities include canoeing, boating, fishing, bird watching, bicycling, and hiking. The corridor area in its boundaries was deemed a state critical area in 1976, and in 1988 it was designated by Congress as a national recreation area (NPS, 2015). The park is considered unique because it is the NPS' first 'partnership park' (Dressler, pers. comm. 2014; NPS, 2015). Indeed, of the 54,000 acres in the park's borders, the NPS actually owns only 67 of them. Instead the NPS works with many partners who either own or involved with the land on the river to enact its mission of preserving and protecting the area for the benefit of future generations (NPS, 2015). These partners are too numerous to name here in their entirety, but a few main collaborators include the Twin Cities' regional government known as Met

Council, the parks and recreation departments of the various municipalities along the river, Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and MNRRA's two primary nonprofit supporters, the Mississippi River Fund and the Friends of the Mississippi.

Voyageurs National Park, in contrast, is located in northern Minnesota on the Canadian border and is "just not enroute to anything" (Schoewe, pers. comm., 2014) (see Figure 4). While there are four entrances to the park, 11 miles away from park boundaries lies the main gateway community of International Falls, population 6424 (US Census, 2010). The park is 218,200 acres, a large portion of which is water (Figure 5).

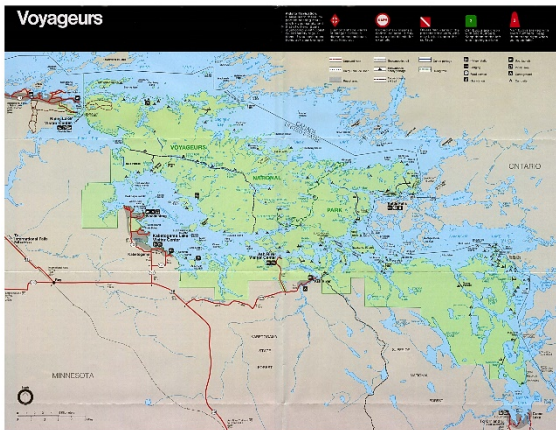


Figure 4 (NPS)



Figure 5 (NPS)

In accordance with its propensity towards water-based activities, the most popular things to do in the park include boating, canoeing, and fishing, although hiking and snowmobiling are available and popular as well. Voyageurs was established in 1975 after years of effort and conflict. Much of the parkland was adapted from the U.S. Forest Service, but some of it was taken from private landowners in the area, which has caused deep distrust and anti-government and anti-park sentiment in the area for years after the park's establishment. Most of the conflict involved property rights and hunting rights (Witzig, 2004), but in the past decade or so, park-community relations have improved

substantially as the past few superintendents have made it a priority (Schoewe, pers. comm., 2014). Like MNRRA, Voyageurs has outside partners that assist its mission. The primary partner is the Voyageurs National Park Association, established in 1965 and essential in the park's creation (Witzig, 2004). The other main partner is The Heart of the Continent, an international Ontario-Minnesotan nonprofit organization that promotes the wellbeing of the region's landscapes.

It is important to consider in analysis that both MNRRA and Voyageurs National Park are fairly unusual parks. They are both primarily water-based parks, and the common recreation activities are unlike those of the majority of national parks in that they require boats. They also are both relatively new parks in the system, so they were established in a different era than more 'traditional' parks and are not known for a large numbers of visitors.

According to the NPS Statistics website, which for MNRRA lists the number of visitors per year since 2011, the park averages just under 100,000 visitors per year. This count, however, includes only visitors that enter the visitor center in downtown St. Paul and those, including all school children, who participate in NPS led education or excursions such as hiking, biking, or canoeing. A more accurate estimate when examining the visitation data collected for the local municipal parks along the river that MNRAA overlays is about 9 million, many of whom do not know they are in a national park (Labovitz, pers. comm. 2015). As far as race and ethnicity, MNRRA staff will be the first to admit that this knowledge about park visitors' is scant. Part of this can be attributed to the urban/partnership nature of the park:

Usually in more traditional parks they have a better way to count because they have entrance gates, they have confined spaces, they have ways to sample, and because of the nature of our partnership park it [the park] is scattered over 72 river miles. [...] at the end of the day we only know something about visitors who actually interact with us, our staff directly. (Dressler, pers. comm., 2014)

The incompleteness of MNRRA's counting methods is clearly reflected in the discrepancy between the official count and the estimated actual count. The lack of complete knowledge of visitor demographics at Voyageurs is also evident, even when it has the elements of a 'traditional' park that Dressler describes. When I asked Ranger Schoewe about demographics, she laughed and replied, "I'm not sure I can answer that, but I'll try" (pers. comm., 2014). Voyageurs receives on average 232,800 visitors per year, with the annual count starting in 1976 (NPS, 2015). Voyageurs counts visitors as those who come into three of the four visitor centers (one is not staffed) and by flying over different park sections and counting boats each day for a month. They do not keep track of race/ethnicity, and I did not find evidence that a study about it has ever been done by the NPS or anyone else. Dressler mentions that part of the reason the race/ethnicity data are incomplete or nonexistent in these parks is because of the federal government's hesitation to conduct nonessential citizen surveys for "scary big brother stuff [...] and endless surveys to endless citizens, thereby annoying them" (pers. comm., 2014).

Unless a specific study is conducted about visitor race and ethnicity by a non-NPS partner, it is likely that this sort of data is as spotty or absent at other parks, not just the two Minnesotan parks in discussion here. The counting methods employed and the lack of visitor data related to race/ethnicity in the NPS is important because the basis for the relevancy argument largely lies in the assumed fact that people of color are not

represented in park visitors. From the lack of complete data, however, clearly this ‘fact’ is based more off assumption and unofficial observation. I am not disputing the truth that people of color are underrepresented in parks, and Director Jarvis has said that numbers have not been helpful in the efforts for inclusion (meaning that the few studies that have been done on the subject have not resulted in higher participation from people of color thus far) (NPS, 2015). I am implying, however, that if the parks want to remain relevant and be inclusive, precise baseline data would be helpful in tracking progress.

Indeed, progress is needed no matter what the baseline is in MNRRRA and Voyageurs because the intersection of racism and nature, particularly that surrounding recreation, is unfortunately quite familiar to Minnesota. Conflict between the American Indian populations of the region and whites has existed since before statehood and continues to this day in disputes over land use and cultural oppression. There are modern examples of racial tension, involving both American Indian populations and other peoples of color, which exacerbate the need for the inclusion of people of color in Minnesota’s parks. While several of these examples take place over the state line in Wisconsin, the geographic and cultural similarities, and shared news cycles, unite the two states as one region affected. The enormous controversy over the 1983 Voigt Decision that granted the Chippewa hunting rights in accordance with their cultural practices that other non-Chippewa hunters (namely, white hunters) did not have led to racist exchanges and threats of physical violence (Satz, 1991). More recently, racial tensions erupted surrounding the primarily Twin Cities-based Hmong community when a Hmong man from St. Paul killed six white hunters in Wisconsin during a hunting trip. The incident is suspected to have devolved due to racial slurs, but more importantly the incident

prompted a large, often racist reaction towards the Hmong from (primarily white) hunting communities all over Minnesota and Wisconsin and is still a sensitive subject (Schein and Va-Megn, 2007). Another example of racial tension in parks occurred recently in MNRRA with the transfer of the Coldwater Spring site in Hennepin County to the NPS in 2010. The conflict is over whether the NPS has properly handled the management of the land in accordance with the Dakota, who consider the site extremely important culturally and in some cases would like ownership of it. While the controversy has quieted, it is not necessarily over (Meersman, 2011). In addition to these large, yet isolated incidents, the recent demographic shift of Minnesota (the state went from being around 95% white in 1990 to 85% white in 2010 (US Census)), which has occurred in urban and rural areas, affects race relations in natural recreation areas. A geographer at the University of Minnesota found in a study of small Minnesota towns that white residents of these rural areas “othered” people of color and racialized space, specifically because rural spaces are often synonymous with natural and labeled as white (Leitner, 2012). This situation, both in Minnesota parks and gateway communities, speaks to the discrimination hypothesis of why people of color do not visit parks in high numbers. Because racial disparities and discrimination exist in Minnesota natural areas, it is very important that Voyageurs and MNRRA work towards the inclusion of people of color.

A Call to Action in MNRRA and Voyageurs. In this section, I will overview some of the programs and initiatives of MNRRA and Voyageurs that promote deep engagement and are in line with the goals and actions laid out in *A Call to Action* as well as what each park has planned for the Centennial.

MNRRA has multiple programs that help accomplish specific actions in *A Call to Action*. A few are as follows, along with which actions they fulfill (NPS, 2015):

- *Ticket to Ride*, provided in partnership with the Mississippi River Fund and National Park Foundation, provides transportation for Twin Cities youth to and from their home park, and sometimes program registration fees as well. MNRRA's Ticket to Ride program contributes to the national Ticket to Ride program's goal of serving more than 100,000 youth per year (National Park Foundation, 2015). This program aligns directly with *A Call to Action*'s #18 Ticket to Ride (expand student's opportunities to directly experience national parks through transportation assistance) and #4 In My Back Yard (improve urban resident's knowledge of and access to outdoor experience close to home).
- *Big River Journey* is an award-winning program for hundreds of 4th -6th graders each year that integrates education (science, geography, history) with on-the-river experience in a way that is meant to foster river stewardship. It involves a teaching training session, a class field trip, and pre and post field trip lesson plans. Price of the program is greatly reduced for schools with 50% poverty rate or 50% students of color. It covers specific actions #7 Next Generation Stewards, #11 Focus the Fund (provide community assistance to urban parks, waterways, and large landscape conservation), and #5 Parks for People (enhance connection of densely populated, diverse communities to parks, waterways to recreation and conservation).
- *River City Revue* is a three year old program that partners with Works Progress, a Twin Cities artist organization, to put on a summer event involving art

exhibitions, science talks, and living history presentations all about the river. Its target audience is “the younger, urban arts community” (Dressler, pers. comm., 2014) for the purpose of bringing new audiences who otherwise might not have considered themselves someone who would go to a traditional NPS program or interact with the river in that way. This program is an example of action #10 Arts Afire (showcasing the meaning of parks to new audiences through art and fresh perspectives).

- *Friends of the Mississippi Stenciling Program* works with Twin Cities school groups and other youth in their neighborhoods to spray paint stencil storm drains that lead directly to the Mississippi River, marking them against dumping. Because the program is not at MNRRA, “the trick is to connect [the kids’] location, neighborhood, to the river”, and not being there is a definite drawback because the river is “such an important educational tool, to stand there and talk about what’s in front of them instead of trying to picture it, especially for kids” (Uzarek, pers. comm., 2014). Nevertheless this program fits well with *A Call to Action* #7 Next Generation Stewards and #16 Live and Learn (reaching the K-12 population through educational partnerships).
- *Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures* is a popular and successful program started in 2008 in partnership with the nonprofit Wilderness Inquiry. It involves actually getting Twin Cities public school students out in Voyageur canoes for a day long field trip of seeing and learning about the river. For many students it is their first experience on the river, and former superintendent Labovitz remembers how when kids got in the canoes they were scared, but as they left at the end of the day

they would say it was the greatest day of their life (pers. comm., 2015). The program is a large proportion of the 25,000 kids MNRRA engages every year. It readily fulfills action #16 Live and Learn, #2 Step by Step (creating deep connections between younger generation and parks through diverse experiences), and #4 In My Back Yard.

- *The Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary* is not a program but a well-regarded park creation/clean up initiative in which MNRRA was one of 25 partners involved in the grassroots efforts of East Side St. Paul residents to convert historically rich yet trash-littered site into a peaceful nature sanctuary. The East Side is a historic and current prominently immigrant community, and the bottom up community approach is very much in line with ideals in *A Call to Action*, such as #5 Parks for People.

Voyageurs National Park also has programs inspired by or in line with *A Call to Action*, although less than MNRRA. To a certain extent there are fewer programs because so many of the actions are aimed at urban parks. This does not account for the non-urban actions, however, that Voyageurs could implement and either are not or have not published anything about their implementation. Regardless, the programs that had public information about them are:

- *Hike to Health* is a recently established program in partnership with the Rainy Lake Medical Center and Voyageurs National Park Association (VNPA) promoting the use of the park's hiking trails to get exercise. There is a 'trail passport' book to track which ones have been completed, and the park recognizes those who complete each trail. This program stems from action #14 Take a Hike,

Call Me in the Morning (expand health community's use of parks and value of parks as a tool).

- *Environmental Education and Traveling Trunks* are Voyageurs' two primary education programs for school children, the former being on site and the latter being loaned out to schools. Action #16 Live and Learn best aligns with these programs.

While all of these programs are inherently related to the mission of the Centennial because they are related to *A Call to Action*, what each park is planning specifically for the 2016 celebration is important as well. There is evidence that planning is underway, but it is as clear that plans are not yet set. Both park websites have Centennial volunteer pages, yet both are currently blank. When I spoke with Voyageur National Park Ranger Schoewe, the national Centennial toolkit had only just been downloaded. At MNRAA, there are plans in the works with partners like Friends of the Mississippi to put on major events like bio-blitzes, and this summer a full time, year-long internship dedicated to volunteer recruiting and coordinating for the Centennial is supposed to start. Efforts are there, but it is apparently too early to know what is to come in 2016.

The NPS' Future: The Urban Factor

A park's intrinsic value lies in the stories it has to tell, not how many programs it has to offer. In the fight for relevancy and the journey towards inclusivity, however, the number of programs and initiatives that go beyond traditional ranger-led nature walks for whoever shows up indicates which parks might be having the bigger impact. This section discusses how the comparison between MNRRA and Voyageurs National Park exemplifies how national parks located in urban areas are models of the changes the NPS

wants to make in its second century beyond the fact that they are located closer to larger population centers.

Representatives of both parks expressed the importance of children in their programming and engagement, but with slightly different tones. At MNRRA, staff “consciously looked at engaging school kids through programs [...] to train young people that they had this park resource and then to develop habits as they got older to be park visitors [...] it was strategic” (Labovitz, pers. comm., 2015). The general attitude about serving the public was: “we need to make sure the programs we offer and our thoughts [...] are keeping aligned with the changing country and that [...] we’re found valuable by the changing demographic” (Dressler, pers. comm., 2014). At Voyageurs, the sentiment about youth in parks was strong, but the strategy towards attracting diverse demographics not as much: “children are the best learners, they are the future [...] they are the ones who in 20 or 50 years are going to either preserve them or do away with them, so it’s hugely important to get children here” (Schoewe, pers. comm., 2014).

Similarly, when talking about the Centennial, representatives of each park reacted differently. For MNRRA, both representatives were quite knowledgeable about different facets of the Centennial and viewed it as a welcome and overdue challenge. Voyageurs did not share this attitude. At Voyageurs, Ranger Schoewe says “it’s going to be more of a challenge to do the Centennial project [...] we don’t have the staff, the gateway community, anything to get volunteers into the park [...] smaller parks can’t spend time on this like everyone would like” (pers. comm., 2014). In other words, “the director [...] wants us to do all these innovative things, but we have 100 years of traditions not doing those things” (Labovitz, pers. comm., 2015).

These difference are striking, especially in light of an observation by Labovitz:

Places like MNRRA are great incubators for trying new things, tweaking and changing them [...] I characterize them as the fruit flies of the National Park Service [...] the folks that gravitate towards the urban parks are change oriented and non-status quo oriented. (pers. comm., 2015)

A Call to Action and the Centennial are “change oriented and non-status quo oriented”, too. Interviewees mentioned that MNRRA was “doing things routinely that other parks were striving to start doing” (Labovitz, pers. comm., 2015).

National parks in urban areas seem to be not early adopters of the ideas driving relevancy and inclusion, but the creators. These parks are at an obvious and undeniable advantage in that geographic location and population numbers are in their favor. However, there is more to national parks in urban areas that make them both unique and at the forefront of the NPS. Their propensity to partnerships that make for more effective engagement, easier opportunities for continual and thus deeper engagement, and their experimental nature all factor into this difference. Every park can get to this state, and that is what the NPS aims to do through *A Call to Action* and the Centennial - but reasons for the rise of the Urban Agenda and general urban focus came about within this overarching push for change and inclusion of people of color.

Will It Work? The NPS Journey Towards Inclusivity

After delving into the documents and the minds of the people who work so closely with initiatives aiming to include people of color and embody the Urban Agenda, the question still hangs: Will NPS efforts to create inclusive landscapes actually work? The short answer is that racial/ethnic inclusion is a complicated, messy process that has no clear path and, as the Director said himself, “a culture shift that will not happen

overnight” (Jarvis, 2014). Nevertheless I am optimistic, but before I say why I explain why the efforts might fail.

The NPS efforts towards the Centennial and Urban Agenda will only stay strong and have room to grow if they are funded. The 2015 budget for the NPS proposed an additional \$300 million over the next three years for the Centennial, bringing the total budget up to \$2.6 billion (NPS, 2014). This is great - it is more than the NPS has received before, and the results are already showing. Much of the funding is temporary, however, and if the past teaches us anything it is that political tides and the funding changes that come with it can greatly derail progress. The Great Recession of 2008 led to hiring freezes across the NPS and generally slowed down operations, including the Centennial planning in progress. Then in 2013, the government shutdown affected the NPS dramatically - there was no money to keep parks functioning, and this set back many units and programs beyond the shutdown period. The future is unpredictable, and upcoming events such as national elections in 2016 and others unforeseen could have definite, detrimental effects on the NPS, including the withering of the progress made by the Centennial.

Another potential pitfall is the varying strengths of the connections between NPS policy/organizational changes and the actual enactments of *A Call to Action* etc. across scale, namely national to local. The levels of knowledge and engagement with the Centennial and its efforts differ significantly between more senior NPS employees/partners who are involved at the national level and NPS employees/partners who work primarily at the local, park level. Those who work at the national level are well versed in the culture shift and see themselves as a part of it. Those who work at the local

level, however, seem slightly more detached; it is one of many things to direct their attention towards, not a change that shifts how they do their job on a daily basis. Also, when researching examples of these changes in action, the same dozen or so parks came up repeatedly. While I am not saying that the Centennial and cultural changes are happening at only a dozen parks - there is an entire NPS webpage documenting programs and events from all over the country that fulfill specific actions from *A Call to Action* (NPS, 2015) - I am saying that the conversation and involvement needs to expand beyond this central Centennial cohort if the goals of these initiatives are going to work at a large scale.

An additional pitfall related to bridging national and local scales is the NPS' risk of disproportionately addressing the leisure studies hypotheses for why people of color are disproportionately absent from national parks: marginality/elitism, subculture/ethnicity, and discrimination. While to a certain extent the NPS addresses each of these through *A Call to Action*, the Urban Push, and the Centennial, it more heavily favors solutions addressing the marginality/elitism hypothesis. This is good, because socioeconomic and knowledge barriers to national parks are undoubtedly significant hurdles. However, they are arguably also the easiest to address because funding transportation, infrastructure, and publicity is more tangible, and importantly, measureable. In the broader picture, however, it is clear that the socioeconomic and knowledge barriers of the marginality hypothesis are the direct or indirect result of societal discrimination, or the reasons behind the discrimination hypothesis. While the NPS is enacting policies combating racial discrimination such as hiring more people of color and providing diversity training, the realm of the discrimination hypothesis is so

close to race that it crosses the line from professional stance (NPS policy) to personal stance (individual employee perspective). These sort of actions are what the NPS needs to track closely; even if physical access is improved, if national parks are not actively combating the idea that they are unwelcoming to people of color through interpreting inclusive histories and working to lessen individual employees' ingrained biases, the NPS will not achieve its goals of inclusivity and relevancy.

Despite these obstacles that might block NPS success in creating inclusive landscapes, I am optimistic that success will come. Everyone that I talked to was truly passionate about the NPS and believed in the essence of its original purpose. Superintendent Labovitz says: "The mission is very profound - it's to protect and interpret park resources for all Americans unimpaired for future generations. It doesn't say just for a slice of Americans, but for all folks, for everybody" (pers. comm. Jan. 15, 2015). In his diversity webinar, Director Jarvis says the NPS is special because "only it [as a government agency] has story *and* place" (2014). If the NPS can use this passion and momentum for change to get to the roots of its purpose and become the steward of truly public, democratic places supported by and for all people of the United States, this will be revolutionary. I am optimistic because through these current initiatives parks not only can become, *but are becoming*, emotionally, intellectually, economically, communally, and narratively impactful landscapes that "are gateways into that understanding" of who we as a culture really are, and "everybody can tap into that" (Finney, pers. comm. January 8, 2015). When the parks become landscapes that everybody can relate to from all of their different perspectives, simply because landscapes that are important to someone or some group in the society that *I* belong to are

therefore important to *me*, there are strong implications for social change. I see the places in the NPS becoming physical spaces where social justice and change occur, because if the current initiatives work in the long run (which they are designed to do), they will be places that tell our culture's truths, which I interpret as places of power and empowerment. I think this is radical - and better yet, if the NPS continues to listen, learn, and invest in what they have already started to, I think it is possible.

Conclusion

For many years, the NPS has not been inclusive of people of color. This stems from many factors including the historic construction of nature and parks by dominant white culture, collective memories of certain kinds of nature of people of color, geographic mismatch, and lack of proper and effective engagement. As the organization goes into its second official century of existence, however, there is hope that all of this is changing for the better. Between the Centennial and the Urban Agenda, the NPS seems determined to make sure it truly fulfills its mission of preserving unimpaired the natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations (NPS, 2015). My research revealed that there is not only an NPS-wide momentous effort to bring about inclusion, thus relevance, but an equal if not larger effort to make sure changes are effective and sustainable.

Undoubtedly, however, upfront challenges threaten NPS progress. A drop in funding could drastically stall or eliminate all that is being done, and that drop is a potential threat every few years due to politics and economic swings. A lack of inclusion (ironically) of more rural park staff working not in a 'crown jewel' like Yosemite, Yellowstone etc. but in a low profile park threatens to create a divide within the NPS

about vision, purpose, and culture, and ultimately could negatively affect the amount of progress that could be made. The NPS needs to make sure everyone in the agency sees the changes in a positive light and as a deep organizational, perhaps even personal, shift, not just another task of many to attend to. Lastly, an increased amount of effort, commitment, and new ideas put towards achieving inclusivity will expand the capacity of success, so it is extremely important that the NPS recruits and maintains as many supporters as possible in its efforts through practices of deep engagement, thoroughly addressing solutions for the discrimination hypothesis, and placemaking.

There is ample room for future research in the topic of NPS inclusivity and relevancy, especially seeing that much of the current change in the NPS will need to be analyzed and evaluated in years to come. First and foremost, more in depth and frequent studies of visitor race/ethnicity, both quantitative and qualitative, are crucial to tracking progress of inclusion. Specifically, I call for in-depth visitor studies at both MNRRA and Voyageurs National Park looking at race/ethnicity and public perceptions of the parks. Similarly, studies tracking race/ethnicity of NPS and partner employees and the hiring rates of people of color over the next decade are important to continue. Several years after the Centennial, a follow up study on the NPS looking at the increase of programming and initiatives aimed at connecting people to parks closest to them and their use of deep engagement in order to be sustainable would be helpful. A follow up qualitative inquiry on the pervasiveness of the organizational culture shift and how much ideas and attitudes of NPS employees line up with the ideals of the Centennial across different kinds of NPS employees, such as national administrators, urban park staff, and

rural park staff could help the NPS know where to focus its training and mission education efforts.

Only time will tell if the momentum and effort towards inclusivity will be successful. Of course, part of the challenge of achieving success is defining it, which is something the NPS should work to do more clearly. In other words, if the goal is to transform into landscapes of justice, what exactly does justice look like? Surely not every single person needs to go to a national park for justice to be achieved, but it is difficult to know how to measure the public's intrinsic value of these landscapes and at what scale that value is demonstrated. Perhaps it is wise in this case to think of, as many have before, justice as a journey and not a destination.

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Figures:

Figure 1: Stanfield McCown, Rebecca E. *Evaluation of National Park Service 21st Century Relevancy Initiatives: Case Studies Addressing Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the National Park Service*. Diss. U of Vermont, 2011. N.p.: np, nd. Print

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